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ABSTRACT

In little more than 2 decades following the death of General Francisco Franco, Spain celebrated its transition from the most centralized to one of the most decentralized nations in Europe--in government and education. The objective of the study described in this report was to describe and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a complex and comprehensive reform that ultimately resulted in a successful but uneasy transfer of authority and financial resources from the center to the regions. A conventional field-study method to gather data was conducted on six occasions between 1987 and 1997. More than 200 individuals were interviewed, including university scholars, senior Ministry of Education officers, regional educational managers, school directors, and teachers. Results can provide useful guidelines for other nations attempting to decentralize their educational system. Recommendations, based on Spain's experience with reform, include negotiating decentralization between the system center and regions; letting a court decide disagreements; making changes incrementally; transferring physical resources, such as school buildings and equipment, in good condition; redirecting reforms; keeping quality managers on the job; balancing funding between rich and poor regions; depopulating the ministry of education; developing educational leaders; adequately funding the educational expansion; provide strong political support; sharing vision; and governing by laws and not personalities. (RT)

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Education Reform and Management Publication Series

Democratization and Educational Decentralization in Spain: A Twenty Year Struggle for Reform

E. Mark Hanson

Vol. I – No. 3 – June 2000

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Table of Contents

Foreword III

Abstract V

About the Author VII

Acknowledgments IX

Executive Summary 1

Introduction 7

Part 1. The Franco Years: Forces for Centralization 11

The Regional Problem 11

Centralized Government Structure 13

Education: The Long Polar Night 13

Part 2. The Transition: 1975-1982 17

The Politics of Consensus 17

The Constitution and Shared Governance 18

The Constitution and Educational Control 20

Public Expenditure Increases 21

State Administrative Personnel 22

Part 3. Politics of the Left: 1982-1996 25

Political Parties and Power 25

Educational Reform from the Political Left 26

Decentralization on Ice 28

Decentralization Unfrozen 30

Part 4. Politics of the Right: 1996-1999 31

The Education Wars 31

Part 5. Decentralized Regions 35

Educational Finance 35

The Crisis of the Humanities 36

Part 6. Decentralized Schools **41**

School-based Management (1985-1995): De Jure 41

School-based Management (1985-1995): De Facto 43

Mid-course Corrections (1995 and Continuing) 46

Part 7. Binding the Nation Together: De Jure vs. De Facto Reform **49**

Diplomas 49

Ministry of Education Inspectors 49

National Minimum Requirements (Minimos) 50

National Assessment of Educational Quality 51

The Conference of Educational Counselors 52

The State Educational Advisory Council 53

The Ministry of Education as a Force for Decentralization 55

Part 8. Conceptual Analysis **57**

Political Culture and Historical Memory 58

Institutions, Breakpoints, Turning Points and Course Corrections 58

Bridging, Embedding and Institutionalizing 59

The Socialist Government's Turning Point 60

The Course Correction of the Political Right 60

Foreword

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, "democratization" became a compelling theme of social science scholarship. Scholars for the most part failed to predict that event, but since then many have turned their attention to explaining processes of democratic expansion, not only in the former Soviet-block countries, but in all nations moving from authoritarian rule. Yet even when addressing issues of democratic change, social scientists have largely ignored one of the most important elements in democratization—the school as the primary structure designed for conveying values that are critical in making democracy stable and durable. E. Mark Hanson is among a very few who have made thoughtful forays into the nexus between education and democracy in different societal contexts.

With this book, E. Mark Hanson solidifies his reputation as a leading authority in this genre of scholarship. Well before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and well before the role of education in democratization became commonly acknowledged, Professor Hanson broke new ground in this arena with his studies of school reform in Colombia and Venezuela. With this new study of educational democratization in Spain, Prof. Hanson brings us to a new level of clarity about the complexities and vicissitudes of systemic change. The reader will find that Prof. Hanson's account of education in the democratization of Spain has lessons that go well beyond an understanding of political processes in that country. Indeed, no scholar of democratization, whether in Europe, Latin America, or elsewhere, can afford to ignore Prof. Hanson's scholarship, and particularly this newest contribution.

Erwin H. Epstein
Professor and Chair
Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Counseling Psychology
Loyola University of Chicago

I first met Professor Mark Hanson in 1987 when he visited the History of Education Department at the National University of Distance Education in Madrid. Since then Professor Hanson has closely followed the process of political and administrative decentralization in Spain. What is difficult for many Spaniards, including academics, to comprehend in its totality has been captured by Professor Hanson with precision and depth.

Over the last quarter century, Spain has pursued a process quite unusual in the history of nations. I refer to the experience of rebuilding a State by shifting away from autocratic authority and highly centralized structures of government. In making that transition in the decade of the 1970s, Spain, together with Portugal, initiated a new wave of democratization that later swept through numerous countries of Latin America as well as the Communist nations of Eastern Europe. The uniqueness of the Spanish case, even more so than that of Portugal, rests with the fact that there was created at the same time a democratic and decentralized State. This last process resulted in a a horizontal and vertical distribution of power, the classic division of powers, and the formation of 17 regional territories, called Autonomous Communities, with their own legislative bodies.

Mark Hanson's focus on this complex transformation process was advanced by solid research with primary data over many years of study. His contribution consists of studying the outcomes and errors of the reform process by linking the administrative decentralization of education with political decentralization and in examining the phenomenon not only de jure but also de facto. Finally, the work not only adopts a macro political focus, but also includes an analysis of a lesser studied phenomenon—decentralization at the local school level.

Dr. Manuel de Puelles Benítez
Department of Educational History
National University of Distance Education, Spain
Author of Educación e Ideología en la España Contemporánea, 4th ed. (Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, S. A., 1999)

Abstract

In little more than two decades following the death of the iron-fisted dictator General Francisco Franco, Spain celebrated its transition from the most centralized to one of the most decentralized nations in Europe—in government and education. Few countries if any in modern times can boast of similar success. The objective of this study is to describe and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a complex and comprehensive reform that ultimately resulted in a successful but uneasy transfer of authority and financial resources from the center to the regions. While the reform in law and policy set out to construct a decentralized educational system that would be responsive to a state and regional shared governance process (de jure), the study explains the actual outcome (de facto) which appears to have gone considerably beyond the original intent. This outcome is particularly interesting because decentralization initiatives typically deliver much less than originally promised. In tracing the change process, this paper examines the turbulent political, economic, and organizational complexities of the reform as it: (1) reacts against the concentrated centralism of the Franco years (1939-1975); (2) makes the transition from autocratic to democratic government (1975-1982); (3) survives a dramatic shift to the political left (1982-1996); and (4) endures the trauma of a shift to the political right (1996-).

The author conducted the study with the cooperation of the Autonomous University of Madrid and the permission of the Ministry of Education's research division (CIDE). A conventional field study method to gather data in Spain was conducted on six occasions between 1987 and 1997. Over 200 individuals were interviewed, including university scholars, senior Ministry of Education officials, politicians, constitutional lawyers, regional educational managers, school directors and teachers. In addition, several hundred documents (e.g., laws, policies, final reports, journal articles, statistical abstracts) were reviewed.

About the Author

Mark Hanson is a professor at the University of California, Riverside where he has a joint appointment with the Graduate School of Education and the Anderson Graduate School of Management. He received his B.S. and M. Ed. from the University of Illinois, Urbana and his Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico in Educational Administration and Latin American Studies. His interest in the Hispanic world began in the 1960s as a Peace Corps instructor in Puerto Rico and then as a junior professor at the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia. His long standing interest in regional and local development concerns began in those early years as he discovered the unrealized potential of the land when driving a motorcycle across the back roads of Colombia and then up the Pan American Highway to the United States.

Professor Hanson has received two Fulbright Senior Scholar Research Awards and has been a member of the Fulbright Senior Scholar Advisory Committee for Latin America. He has also been a Visiting Scholar at the Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración in Caracas, the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Buenos Aires, the Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa (CIDE) of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) in Madrid, and the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in Spain. He has conducted field studies of educational reform, particularly decentralization initiatives, in several Latin American nations as well as in the Middle East. He has been a consultant on topics of educational reform in developing countries for UNESCO, UNDP, USAID, USIA, the World Bank and the Harvard Institute for International Development.

Currently, Dr. Hanson is beginning a study of Mexico's educational decentralization reform.

Acknowledgments

Over the course of this study I made six data-gathering trips to Spain between 1987 and 1997. During this time, several institutions made invaluable contributions to making this study possible. In particular, I would like to thank the Center for Research and Educational Documentation (CIDE) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) for providing me with research base of operation on several occasions and opening doors for me all around Spain. In addition, I am grateful to the University of California's Faculty Exchange Program with the Autonomous University of Madrid where I spend several weeks prowling the libraries and interviewing distinguished academics. A special thanks for research funding from the Academic Senate of the University of California, Riverside and from the Spanish government under the Agreement of Friendship, Defense and Cooperation Between the United States and Spain.

Many individuals provided valuable insight, guidance, and feedback during all phases of the research project. A special thanks to Mercedes Muñoz-Repiso, the enormously helpful Research Director of CIDE; Miguel Beltrán Villalva, a distinguished Professor of Sociology at the Autonomous University of Madrid; Aurelio Villa Sánchez, Director of the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Deusto; and Julián López Yañez and Marita Sánchez Moreno, Professors of Educational Science at the University of Seville. My greatest debt is to three scholars for their insight into the decentralization process and their thoughtful critiques of this manuscript: Juan Prawda of the World Bank, Manuel de Puelles Benítez of the National University of Distance Education (UNED), and José Luis García Garrido formerly of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture but now back at UNED. Finally, I am grateful to Barbara Bruns, Coordinator of the World Bank's Education Reform and Management Team and her colleagues, Michael Drabble and Karen Edge, for their interest in adding the Spanish case to their series of country studies, and for their helpful collaboration throughout the process. Amanda Enayati did a superb job of editing the draft and designing the layout and cover. I alone am responsible for any errors of fact or judgment.

Executive Summary

Educational decentralization involves the transfer of decision-making authority from national to sub-national agencies. Because of a special interest in this type of reform effort, I have spent a significant part of my academic career studying educational decentralization initiatives in Latin America and the Middle East. Out of this pursuit I have developed at least three articles of faith:

1. Decentralization is neither good nor bad, but simply a means to an end.
2. A successful decentralization effort requires a well thought out design, but a good design is never enough. When considering various educational reforms I have studied, I once described Venezuela's 1969 decentralization initiative as "the most elegant in design, comprehensive in coverage, noble of purpose and complete in its failure."[1] As successive political parties assumed power, that creative decentralization reform sank like a doomed ship. To be successful, a good design plus political will across the political spectrum are essential ingredients.
3. To understand a decentralization strategy, one must understand the political, economic and historical contexts that give it birth. Just as all nations are different, all decentralization strategies are different. However, this does not mean that the experiences of one nation cannot inform the educational leaders and planners of another. Knowledge is cumulative.

Spain is one of the few countries to have implemented a far-reaching educational decentralization reform systematically and completely. Many countries have attempted such a reform, but with less success. Very often decentralization reforms in education are born in political arenas and driven by motives such as reducing national educational budgets by transferring costs to sub-national units, breaking the power of teachers' unions, strengthening centralized control under the guise of decentralization, establishing democratic roots after long periods of autocratic government, or controlling political demands for regional autonomy. While improving the quality of education is always a goal, in my experience it is rarely if ever the principal goal.

There tends to be a fine line between educational decentralization and educational "dumping" – or the transfer of authority and responsibility to sub-national agencies in a haphazard way, without a well thought-out plan, significant advanced preparation, or a tested and workable design. In Spain, even taking into account its unique history, economic, and political structures, I found a different experience and was impressed by the innovative characteristics of its decentralization strategy and

design. Spain has successfully transferred authority to regional and local school levels in a relatively planned and systematic fashion.

A second reason for interest in Spain's experience is that the initial conditions of the Spanish reform are widely shared by other nations. That is, the former Communist nations of Europe as well as many Latin American nations currently are using their educational systems as part of a democratization process to stabilize an unacceptable level of national conflict, or ease and reinforce the transition from autocratic to democratic government.

Spain's successful, but arduous, twenty year effort to decentralize its educational system has produced insightful lessons—both good and bad—on the planning and execution of educational reform. One fundamental lesson is that the successful decentralization of an educational institution is a systemic effort that requires the collaboration of many sectors of government. Such a reform requires an educational design that simultaneously preserves the concept of national identity, unity, and development, while at the same time provides for several semi-autonomous, integrated regional educational systems with sufficient responsibility and authority to pursue their own socio-economic and academic priorities. A second fundamental lesson is that the more the decentralization initiative involves transferring positive opportunities to the regions, municipalities, and local schools rather than simply problems and burdens, the greater the chances for successful change. If the reform is a "win—win" situation for the national and regional governments rather than a "win—lose" situation, the chances for success increase dramatically.

Several other lessons from the Spanish reform can provide useful policy guidelines for other nations attempting to decentralize their educational systems.

Governance:

- *Negotiate, don't dictate.* Rather than being imposed from the top, decentralization should be negotiated between the center and the regions with each receiving specific types and degrees of authority and responsibility over specified items and entities.

- *Let a court decide disagreements.* The center should retain the institutional mechanisms to insure a "one nation" concept, while the regions should have recourse to preserve their legitimate decentralized authority. When disagreements over authority and responsibility between the center and regions develop, a third party such as a special court should decide.

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[1] E. Mark Hanson, "Best (and Worst) Practices in Educational Decentralization: The Cases of Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina and Spain," World Bank Seminar on Educational Decentralization, June 2, 1995, p. 5; E. Mark Hanson, "Administrative Reform in the Venezuelan Ministry of Education: A Case Analysis of the 1970s," International Review of Education, Vol. 30 (1984): 119-140.

- *Change incrementally.* Authority should not be transferred to all regions at the same time, but only when a region demonstrates citizen support as well as financial, administrative, and human resource readiness to assume the new responsibilities.

- *Redirect the reform.* With experience, mid-course corrections to the reform should be undertaken.

- *Transfer the inventory in good condition.* The transfer of physical resources such as school buildings and equipment should take place only after they have been brought up to acceptable standards of repair.

Personnel:

- *Keep quality managers on the job.* Senior ministry and regional educational officials should have enough time on the job to plan and execute specific components of the reform process. Constant changes in personnel, particularly for political reasons, are counterproductive.

- *Depopulate the ministry of education.* Along with authority and financial resources, the personnel who work in a region (teachers and managers) should be transferred to regional control. The ministry of education thus becomes slowly depopulated as its mission is changed.

- *Change the mission of the ministry.* As responsibility and authority are transferred to the regions, the mission of the ministry should shift from control to facilitating and balancing regional educational development through, for example, research, management training, academic assessment, and monitoring compliance with national law and policy.

- *Develop educational leaders.* The provision for a career in educational management based on meritocracy will, over time, build up a constructive corps of experienced educational leaders.

Financial Resources:

- *Adequately fund the educational expansion.* Commensurate with student population growth, sufficient financial resources should be transferred to the regions to ensure the qualitative and quantitative expansion of the educational system.

- *Don't "dump" the financial burden on the regions.* Decentralization should not be used as an excuse to transfer financial responsibility to the regions and local schools when they do not have sufficient disposable resources to fund their new responsibilities.

- *Use block grants.* Transferring funds to the regions in the form of block grants encompassing all sectors of regional government enables each region to establish its own funding priorities.

- *Balance funding between rich and poor regions.* Establishing a system of inter-territorial fund transfers between rich and poor regions helps to equalize the distribution of financial resources supporting schools.

- *The center and the regions should co-finance education.* Regional and municipal governments should have sufficient fundraising authority to contribute significantly to the qualitative and quantitative development of their schools.

The Politics of Education:

- *Strong political support is critical.* A decentralization reform will succeed or fail based more on its political party support than its technical merits.

- *Politicians deplore giving up power.* A political party in power will resist transferring authority to regions controlled by another political party.

- *A shared vision is key.* The greater the shared vision of decentralization among the distinct centers of power (e.g., political parties, church officials, regional governments, municipalities, school leaders), the greater the chance for success.

- *Govern by laws and not personalities.* When a country has reached a point in the democratization process that it is a nation based on laws and not powerful people, then a decentralization reform can, with patience, roughly maintain its intended trajectory despite shifts in political ideology, personalities in power, and competing national priorities.

What about outcomes? Has profoundly decentralizing the control of schools in Spain produced better educational outcomes? Are students learning more? Here the evidence thus far is regrettably limited. In some sense, the very gradualism that may have made the reform politically and administratively feasible has limited its aggregate impact to date on educational efficiency, equity or quality. Only on January 1, 2000 was the transfer of decision-making authority to all 17 regions (autonomous communities) complete. In the meantime, the lack of standardized measures of student learning achievement across Spain's regions and over time has hampered analysis of the relative progress of the earlier vs. later regions to gain decentralized status. What can be said, however, is that the process was successful: decentralization experiences of the first regions were used to inform those coming later, the items to be transferred (personnel, vehicles, buildings) were

negotiated and brought up to acceptable standards, and the governance structures in the center and the regions both felt they benefited from the new arrangements.

In the final analysis, perhaps the greatest lesson from Spain's twenty year reform of government and education, is that a nation made up of many cultural territories, languages, political ideologies, socio-economic strata, and historic traditions can make a peaceful transition from autocracy to a decentralized democracy without splitting into warring factions—as has so often been the case in recent years in other European countries.

As demonstrated in Spain, democratization—when driven by the politics of compromise in pursuit of the national interest—and decentralization (particularly educational decentralization) when in pursuit of shared governance based on regional needs, can be mutually reinforcing. This particular mix, tempered by patience and experience, resulted in what many have called "the miracle of Spain."

Introduction

"The miracle of Spain," it was called by many. In June 1997 Spain celebrated its twentieth anniversary of democratic government. The nation had held together and prospered while others that followed, struggling with their own powerful centrifugal forces in the transition from autocracy to democracy, faltered and fragmented.

On January 1, 2000 Spain, a nation of 40 million people and roughly the combined size of the states of California and New York, completed the transfer of educational decision-making authority to the last of its 17 regional governments.[4] Remarkably, in little more than two decades Spain was transformed from the most centralized nation in Europe to one of the most decentralized—in education and government.

Certainly, Spain's turbulent past did not present promising grounds for a stable democratic government or systematic educational reform. Jordi Solé Tura writes:

> Over the last 170 years, Spain has known four civil wars, innumerable civilian and military revolts, two overthrows of the monarchy, seven constitutions, two immutable laws, three constitutional drafts which were not promulgated, two long military dictatorships that endured 50 years this century, grave episodes of political terrorism, numerous suspensions of constitutional guarantees, and massive political repression that in some cases, like after the 1936-1939 civil war under the Francoist regime, reached frightful proportions.[5]

This political turbulence was by and large rooted in Spain's historical evolution as a heterogeneous collection of ancient kingdoms patched together by marriage and war to form one country. Consequently, it is a nation of nations, a complex mix of regional cultures, languages, socio-economic strata and ideologies.[6]

Dating from the death of General Franco and his 40-years of iron-fisted dictatorship, the path to democracy and decentralization in government and education was complex, troubled, and improbable; at the time, many thought, impossible. However, as the struggle for profound change began, " the decentralization of political power was a premise of Spanish democracy."[7] This premise applied to the public educational system as well because as a component of the government, it would

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[4] Some authors identify the decentralization reform as beginning with the death of General Franco in 1975, others with the new Constitution in 1978, and yet others with the actual beginning of the process in 1979. The author uses this last date as his reference point.

[5] Jordi Solé Tura, Nacionalidades y nacionalismos en España: Autonomías, federalismo, autodeterminación (Madrid: Editorial Alianza, 1985), p. 27.

[6] Bárbara Lotito, Transition in Spain: From Franco to Democracy (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1978).

[7] Luis Moreno, La federalización de España: Poder político y territorio (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1997), p. 78.

adopt the decision making, organization, and management changes that would take place in the larger system of public administration. Consequently, only through understanding the dramatic changes that took place in the government structure as a whole does it become possible to understand the decentralization reform of the educational system.

The path to decentralizing the educational system was not easy, for it took 20 years—at least twice as long as planned. Interestingly enough, while most countries attempting to decentralize their educational systems deliver much less than they promise,[8] in Spain the early signs suggest that the decentralization initiative will go much further than originally expected or even provided for in the authorizing legislation.

The objective of this paper is to describe and explain the complexities of the educational decentralization process over a twenty-year period in Spain. In search of these insights, the study is guided by six research questions:

1. How and why did General Franco centralize the public educational system?
2. In making the autocratic to democratic transition, what were the major building blocks leading to educational decentralization?
3. How did the interactions between the political parties, central government, regional governments and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) positively and/or negatively impact the decentralization process?[9]
4. What mechanisms did the state put into place to ensure that the various decentralized regional educational systems would remain coordinated and integrated?
5. Was there a major difference between the intended (de jure) decentralization model and the one which eventually emerged (de facto)?
6. What conceptual lessons can be learned from Spain's experience in educational decentralization?

The study will develop in four stages and define the impact that each had on the decentralization process:

- 1939-1975: The Franco Years: Forces for Centralization
- 1975-1982: The Transition: Autocratic to Democratic Government
- 1982-1996: Politics of the Left: Education as an Engine of Social Equality

[8] For example, see: Mark Hanson, Educational Reform and Administrative Development: The Cases of Colombia and Venezuela (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).

[9] For simplification, the Ministry of Education and Culture will be referred to as the Ministry of Education, or simply the MEC.

- 1996-1999: Politics of the Right: Education as an Engine of Efficiency and Cultural Preservation

Democratization can be defined as "a process of increasing participation in the formulation and making of decisions that affect the lives of persons in society."[10] Two types of decentralization can be identified. Political decentralization, Dennis Rondinelli writes, is frequently associated with democratization because it transfers "political power for decision making to citizens or their elected representatives." Administrative decentralization is "the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of government."[11] In Spain, democratization and political and administrative decentralization proceeded together.

Also, distinguishing between the de jure system, as it is intended to operate according to law and policy, and the de facto system, as it actually operates, will be important in this analysis. The place to begin understanding the educational decentralization reform is with an awareness of what Spanish society was trying to escape—the legacy of forty years of dictatorship.

[10] Noel McGinn and Erwin Epstein (eds.), Comparative Perspectives in the Role of Education in Democratization: Part I (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 4.
[11] Dennis Rondinelli, Decentralizing Urban Development Programs: A Framework for Analyzing Policy (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Agency for International Development, 1990), pp. 9-12.

Part
1

The Franco Years: Forces for Centralization

The Regional Problem

"Regional differences," Paul Heywood writes," hold the key to understanding the modern Spanish state."[12] During the middle ages as the ancient kingdoms of Spain, especially Castile, Leon, Navarra, Aragon and Catalonia fought to rid the Iberian peninsula of the Arab Moors (711-1492), they formed their own ethnocultural, political, economic and sometimes linguistic identities. With the passing of centuries the smaller kingdoms were absorbed into larger royal houses until approximately 500 years ago when the current boundaries of the nation were established. Nevertheless, those ancient territorial identities carried forward to play a central role in the turbulence of the 20th century and ultimately contributed significantly to the model of educational decentralization. These ancient territories manifested themselves in the form of what Heywood calls "regional nationalism," a vigorous political, socio-cultural, and economic drive toward self-rule.[13] The state's pronouncements of national integration and assimilation in government and education were systematically denounced in these territories as policies of domination and cultural suppression.[14]

Spain's Second Republic (1931-1936), a democratically elected government with anticleric and pro-regionalistic tendencies, went so far as to grant controversial "statutes of autonomy" for the three most demanding and forceful regions in Spain: Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. During the 1930s the centrifugal forces demanding regional political autonomy, linguistic freedom and cultural diversity clashed with the centripetal forces of political centralism, militarism, fascism, and clericalism. This cauldron of opposing forces exploded into the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and resulted in forty years of national dictatorship.[15]

With the Nationalist victory over the democratically elected government of Spain's Second Republic (1931-1936), General Francisco Franco became "Chief of State, Generalissimo of the army, and by the grace of God, Caudillo (maximum leader) of Spain and the Crusade (the Civil War)." Franco believed that democratic elections during the Second Republic had brought about self-serving be-

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[12] Paul Heywood, The Government and Politics of Spain (London: Macmillan Press, 1995), p. 11.
[13] Heywood, p. 17.
[14] José Luis Garcia Garrido, "Spanish Education Policy Towards Non-Dominant Linguistic Groups, 1850-1940," in Schooling, Educational Policy and Ethnic Identity, (ed.) Janusz Tomiak (New York: New York University Press, 1991), p. 313.

havior of elected officials, divisive political competitions between competing political parties that split the population into combative factions and finally led to a collapse of civil order.[16]

Miguel Beltrán points out that "the ideology under Franco was not concerned with modernization nor was it 'revolutionary.' Rather, it was actually an old-style reactionary oligarchical dictatorship."[17] The values of the Franquist regime embodied obedience to authority, political conservatism, family unity, patriotic nationalism, anti-unionism, and anti-Communism. The power of the regime was rooted in two dimensions, institutional and mystical, both of which were rigorously reinforced by the educational system. Institutionally, General Franco held the roles of head of state, head of government, commander-in-chief of the armed forces and leader of the only authorized political party. At a mystical level, the image of Franco was portrayed, along with God and the Catholic Church, as the guiding spirit and paternalistic father of the nation.

Both the power and the image of power were concentrated in the cult of a supreme leader. The single political party served only to reinforce the interests of the existing elitist leadership and restrain the expressions of societal demands.

For Franco, regional nationalism was equated with "separatism," the very notion of which was treasonous to the "sacred unity of Spain." Franquist hostility toward regionalism was intense.

As Gunther points out,

> Systematic campaigns were waged against the Basque and Catalán languages (whose public use was banned during the early years of the regime) and against symbols of cultural distinctiveness: displays of Basque and Catalán flags were illegal, the dancing of the Catalán *sardana* was suppressed, Basque names were forcibly Castilianized, and even Basque tombstones were scraped clean. Needless to say, only Castilian was used in the education system and by the media.[18]

The General's unrelenting objective was to recreate the past glories of a unified imperial state, and the task of the army was to protect that state against all forms of dissent. In short, *the power, energy and resources of the nation had to be centralized to carry out Franco's vision of a strong, unified and glorious Spain.*

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[15] M. Newton, "The People and Regions of Spain," in Democratic Politics in Spain: Spanish Politics After Franco, (ed.) D. Bell (London: Frances Pinter, 1983), p. 192.
[16] Richard Gunther, Giacomo Sani, and Goldie Shabad, Spain after Franco: The Making of a Competitive Party System (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 22.
[17] Miguel Beltrán, "The History of the Administrative System," in Public Administration in Developed Democracies, (ed.) D.C. Rowat (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1988), pp. 255-72.
[18] Gunther, Sani, and Shabad, p. 21.

Centralized Government Structure

Greatly facilitating the centralization of power was a hierarchical government structure that was put into place early in the 19th century following the War of Independence with France. The so-called Napoleonic model of administration divided Spain into 50 provinces (that ignored the boundaries of the historic regions) and created a military-type chain of command that reached into the far corners of the nation.[19] With the Napoleonic model in place, power was easily concentrated in General Franco's hands because, "All key decision makers (the Council of Ministers, civil governors, mayors of large cities, high ranking bureaucrats, and others) were either directly or indirectly appointed by, and responsible to, him."[20] The Minister of Education, in turn, appointed all local school administrators who possessed no authority beyond managing the day-to-day routines of schools.[21] The management system under Franco was not considered to be particularly inefficient; just totally dedicated to top down control.

The taxation system established by the Franquist regime, while supporting the economic interests of the privileged elite, seriously undefended the nation's development needs. The extremely regressive public expenditure policies resembled those of a Third-World nation. When Franco died in 1975, tax revenue as a percent of Gross Domestic Product was 19.5 percent, significantly below the European OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) average of 32.7 percent. Only 9.9 percent of Spain's GDP went to social services while the European Community average was 24 percent.[22] This government policy of low taxation significantly benefited the upper socio-economic classes and had major negative implications for the funding of public schools.

Part of these tax revenues went to support the Catholic Church which had backed Franco's side during the Civil War. The Church received the status of an official religion, and soon the freedom of worship for non-Catholics was eliminated along with civil marriages and divorce. Among the many privileges received by the Church was the right to control the content of what was taught in schools.

Education: The Long Polar Night

Emerging as victors from the debris of war, the Franquist regime began quickly to deconstruct the flexible, liberalized educational system of the democratically elected Second Republic and construct a system that would both frame and fortify the "New Spanish State." José María Maravall, a

[19] Beltrán, "The History of the Administrative System," p. 256.
[20] Gunther, Sani, and Shabad, p. 22.
[21] José Luís García Garrido, "La acción educadora," Historia general de España y America, Tomo XIX, no. 1 (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1992).

former Minister of Education, writes of the actions of Franco's New State. "It paralyzed the building of schools, decimated the ranks of the teaching profession, abused public education in which it saw the germs of a secular evil, promoted inequality between schools and students, pitilessly indoctrinated its students and regressed to rancid pedagogies. . . ."[23] One study reports that between 1936 and 1943 alone over 60,000 teachers were punished in some form (e.g., fired, sanctioned, transferred forcibly, suspended).[24]

As a tool of the Regime, the educational system had at least two principal functions. Firstly, in a political context, to indoctrinate the new generations with values that would reinforce the state; particularly the values of "blind and total obedience" to authority and authoritarianism whether that be found in the government, the Church, or the Caudillo. Gregorio Cámara Villar writes that the paradigm that encompassed these values would make an individual "half monk and half soldier."[25] Secondly, in an academic context, to produce elites for socioeconomic power. He observes that, "To produce lawyers, engineers, and technicians for the state and industry, no more schools are required than those needed by the dominant class to place their children. The children of the masses have no need to go beyond basic literacy; and in this social model a good percentage of the illiterates are tolerable. . . ."[26] Consistent with this point, in 1945 a law was passed fixing compulsory education at 11 years of age, whereas as early as 1920 a decree had been passed making it 14 years of age.

In educational finance, the elitist orientation of the Franquist regime can be seen clearly. Post Civil War educational policy directly favored those who had backed the winning side, roughly the middle and upper classes represented by the monarchists, the Catholic Church, the army, representatives of financial institutions, and political conservatives. The children of these elitist families typically attended private schools while the children of the working classes, which had supported the losing side, generally went to public schools.

At approximately the time of Franco's death in 1975, Spain was spending only 1.78 percent of its GNP on education, the lowest in Western Europe by a considerable margin.[27] The European av-

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[22] Richard Gunther, Spanish Public Policy: From Dictatorship to Democracy (Ohio: Ohio State University, 1996 working paper), pp. 4-6, 36.
[23] José María Maravall, "The Pre-History of Educational Reform in Spain," in Education Reform in Democratic Spain, (ed.) O. Boyd-Barrett and P. O'Malley (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 45.
[24] Francisco Morente Valero, La depuración del magisterio nacional: 1936-41 (Barcelona: Ambito Ediciones, 1997).
[25] Gregorio Cámara Villar, Nacional-Catolicismo y escuela. La socialización política del Franquismo (Madrid: Editorial Hesperia, 1984), p. 332.
[26] Ramón Navarro Sandalinas, La enseñanza primaria durante el Franquismo: 1936-1975 (Barcelona: PPP, 1990), pp. 33-4.
[27] CIDE (Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa), El sistema educativo Español: 1995 (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1995), p. 229.

erage (including the USSR) was 5.1 percent, and the African average was 4.1 percent.[28] During the Franquist regime public education held an exceptionally low priority and tended to be treated as an expense rather than an investment.

Enrollment patterns reflected the government's policy of underfunding education. In 1975, only 70 percent of Spain's 14 year olds attended school; a figure which over the years improved steadily until almost 100 percent of the 15 year olds were in school twenty years later. Also, the student-teacher ratio for pre-school and primary school was 35.5:1 in 1975, as compared to the 18.7:1 ratio twenty years later.[29]

The under-funding of public education tended to force children out of school early, as was typical in rural areas, or into private schools dominated by the various religious orders. In 1931, 29 percent of secondary school students were in private schools, but by 1943 that figure had increased to 71 percent. With the return of democratic government, however, public secondary school enrollment has again approached 70 percent.[30]

The instructional program repeatedly extolled the themes of God, the Catholic Church, Franco, country, and family as if they embodied the ultimate values of truth, unity, security, and moral wisdom. With Catholicism becoming an official religion once again, religious instruction became an obligatory part of the curriculum in public and private schools from the elementary level through the university.

Strict centralized control was exercised over the content of textbooks and they were filled with exaltations such as the following glorifying the maximum leader: "Our tranquility and security we owe to Franco. The Caudillo is beloved by all: his name is pronounced lovingly and with blind faith in the destiny of Spain." Franco was "elected by God as the restorer of Christian civilization, author of peace and well-being, father of his family and father of all Spaniards, model of the Spanish gentleman, and great protector of children and young people."[31]

In sum, the iron-fisted actions of the Franquist regime to control the political, economic and cultural institutions of Spain inevitably resulted in an intense centralization of almost all aspects of government, particularly education. Those societal impulses toward democratic politics, regional decision making, freedom of expression, and equality before the law were quickly and thoroughly stamped out. Within this framework, the Spanish educational system entered what Ramón Navarro calls

[28] UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook (1987), pp. 4-7.
[29] CIDE, El sistema, pp. 213-15, 252-53.
[30] CIDE, The Spanish Educational System (Madrid: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1985), p. 325.
[31] Cámara Villar, pp. 345-48.

"the long polar night."[32] The centrally controlled, underfunded schools had the arduous assignment of legitimizing an autocratic regime that pursued, at least until the mid-1960s, an agenda of social elitism, political discrimination, and economic insularity. The outcome for Spain was to relegate the nation to a Third World status in commerce and education, leaving it far behind the rapidly developing nations of Western Europe.

[32] Ramón Navarro Sandalinas, p. 141.

Part 2

The Transition: 1975-1982

Uncertainty always dictates conditions during the process of a redefinition of government because the established rules, ends, and means become fluid in the transition. At such critical moments the potential for disaster exists, as witnessed in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The delicate and unpredictable transition in Spain began when Juan Carlos I was proclaimed King two days following the death of General Franco in November of 1975. Anticipating a short reign, some cynics referred to the relatively unknown and untested 37 year old king as "Juan the Brief."

Three avenues seemed open: (1) the continuation of Franco's authoritarian regime as guided by the existing Fundamental Laws, the corporatist parliament, and the Council of the Realm; (2) a rupture with the past, possibly leading to political violence, an experience well known to the history of Spain, and (3) reform, an orderly shift from one form of government to another. Democratic reform was the king's intention, and through his adroit leadership coupled with the political skills of his young prime minister, Adolfo Suárez, "he accomplished this difficult feat by relying upon his ties with the Franquist regime and his symbolic identity as monarch, and by carefully cultivating a verbal ambiguity which appealed to the diverse sectors of Spanish society."[33] Perhaps his greatest successes were getting Franco's corporatist parliament to vote itself out of power and to keep the army in its barracks while its traditional privileges of power were subjected to democratic, civilian control.

The Politics of Consensus

The enormous scale of the transition from autocratic to democratic government engendered great uncertainty as existing and emergent centers of power, including the army, the Catholic Church, Franco loyalists, communists, monarchists, and eighty newly formed political parties representing the left, center, and right, fought for their own vested interests and vision of the future. Overshadowing this uncertainty was the fearful specter of the consequence of failure, represented by the potential for a return to the political violence that had long plagued Spanish history.

Consequently, because no single center of power could dominate the political scene, a balance-of-power relationship evolved between an odd collection of old enemies who quickly realized that they would have to work together or risk a terrible consequence. These negotiations were not easy, as each time the participants sat down they confronted more than a hundred years of ideological, social, and territorial cleavages. Even following the first two democratic elections in 1977 and 1979, no political party obtained an absolute majority of seats in the parliament.[34] "Thus, previously hostile political elites develop[ed] relationships of cooperation, tolerance, or trust, which represents a learning process of solving political conflicts that bodes well for the future of democracy."[35]

These political elites skillfully engineered a "negotiated break" from the autocratic government through a series of pacts and agreements, some transacted in secret to facilitate compromises in the face of inflexible, demanding constituents. Initially, the pacts only made marginal changes in many existing policies thus avoiding radical changes which would threaten many key actors. This tactic provided for relative continuity. The pact which had a dramatic impact on the content, organization, and management of government and education came in 1978 with the promulgation of a new Constitution.

The Constitution and Shared Governance

In 1978, after nearly 18 months of debate, a new Constitution was promulgated that was intended to deconstruct the oppressive centralized legal structures and control machinery fixed into place by the Franco regime over a 40 year period. The new Constitution introduced five major building blocks of change, all related to democratization and decentralization and having major implications for the education sector. In addition, the urgent need to resolve the insistent, forceful demands of the historic regions (particularly Catalonia and the Basque Country) for autonomy or even outright independence became an organizing principle for the entire Constitution.

The first building block was the creation of a constitutional monarchy with a democratically elected bicameral parliament (*Cortes Generales*) with a weak upper house (*Senado*) and strong lower house (*Congreso de los Diputados*). The monarchy has specified functions but no specific powers. The real power resides in the hands of the President of the Government, who routinely (but

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[33] Joel Podolny, "The Role of Juan Carlos I in the Consolidation of the Parliamentary Monarchy," in Politics, Society, and Democracy: The Case of Spain, (ed.) R. Gunther (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 90.

[34] Some scholars consider the transition to have ended with the 1977 democratic election, and others argue the end came with the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1978. I am among those who believe that the true test is when one democratically elected government turns power over to another, and in Spain this happened in 1982.

[35] Kerstin Hamann, "The Political Consequences of Uncertainty During Democratic Transitions: The Case of Spain," in Historia de la transición y consolidación en España, (eds.) A Soto et al., Vol. 2 (Madrid: UNED, 1995), pp. 336.

inaccurately) is referred to as the prime minister. The President appoints the ministers of government, including the Minister of Education.

The second major component was to collapse the 50 geographical provinces into 17 so-called autonomous communities (*comunidades autónomas*). In conventional terms, however, they are neither communities nor autonomous, but rather regions given significant amounts of self-rule. Whenever possible, the provinces that made up the historic regions (particularly Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia) with their own languages, traditions and cultures, were united once again with their ancient identities and borders.

The third key feature was a division of power between the central and regional governments through the creation of 17 democratically elected unicameral parliaments. Each parliament would exercise substantial measures of self-rule at the time of the transfer of authority and resources. Given that each regional parliament is popularly elected, the reins of regional governments can, and often do, fall in the hands of different political parties. The various sectors of government (e.g., transportation, tourism, education) in each autonomous community are headed by *consejeros* (counselors) who are selected by the dominant party in a particular autonomous community, or by negotiation if a political coalition is the controlling power. Thus, the Constitution found a balance between the unitary form of government, historically associated with highly centralized rule, and the federal model, a model which had once led to regional political chaos during the First Republic (1873 - 1874). Miguel Beltrán refers to this new Spanish model as "quasi-federal."[34]

The fourth critical feature was a built-in time delay which insured that all of the autonomous communities would not receive decentralized authority at the same time. The Constitution provided two routes for the transfer of authority: fast and slow. The privileged "fast route" was particularly reserved for the three "rebellious territories": Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia. This rapid decentralization of authority served to reduce explosive demands for self-rule in these regions and to head off any possible drive for outright independence. Between 1980 and 1983, the decentralization process was completed in six autonomous communities (the three rebellious regions plus Andalucía, Canarias, and Valencia).

The "slow route" was reserved for those regions that tended to be made up of the artificially created autonomous communities that had no historic or cultural identity of their own. In most instances, symbols of identity had to be developed for them, such as flags and patriotic hymns. This slow route required a five-year waiting period as well as major regional public and political support, as demonstrated by the approval of all provincial councils, two-thirds of the municipal councils, and a

[34] Beltrán, "The History of the Administrative System," p. 262.

popular referendum. This built-in delay in the decentralization process was intended to provide the lessons of experience from those regions that had pursued the fast route as well as demonstrate local support for a transfer of authority.

The fifth and pivotal constitutional building block was the challenge of finding a way to preserve the one nation concept while at the same time providing for regional, semi-autonomous self-government.[37] The framers of the Constitution accomplished this task through the creative exercise of what Heywood calls "artful ambiguity."[38] An article was written that appears to both "rule out" as well as "rule in" regional autonomy. "The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, common and indivisible country of all Spaniards, and recognizes and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is comprised and solidarity amongst them" (Art. 2).

When either the state or an autonomous community feels its rights are being infringed upon by the other, either side can appeal to the ultimate authority, the Constitutional Tribunal. Heywood reports that, "between 1981 and 1991, the central government appealed to the Constitutional Tribunal against 120 of more than 1,500 laws approved by regional governments; by contrast, in the same period, regional governments appealed against 127 of 528 laws approved by the state. . . . After 1989, the number of cases brought before the Constitutional Tribunal fell sharply, suggesting that a more harmonious modus vivendi, with developed channels of communication, was becoming established between centre and regions."[39]

The Constitution and Educational Control

Even within the field of education, a law had to be crafted that would recognize the "indissoluble unity of the nation" as well as recognize the "right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions" (Art. 2). The challenge was to ensure that Spain would have one educational system made up of 17 integrated, semi-autonomous parts rather than 17 separate educational systems.

Given the degree of distrust that traditionally existed between the central government and the historic regions, an ingenious legal device was created that would serve the educational needs of both the center and the regions and ensure that neither would exceed their authority nor violate their obligations. This device is known as the "minimum academic requirements," or simply, "the minimums." In brief, by law the Ministry of Education (MEC) can define 65 percent of the instructional

[37] Puelles Benítez, Manuel de, "Educación y autonomía en el modelo Español de descentralización," Revista de Educación 309 (1996): 166-91.
[38] Heywood, The Government and Politics of Spain, p. 51.
[39] Heywood, The Government and Politics of Spain, p. 51.

material taught in all schools (55 percent in the regions that have their own language), and the autonomous communities can define the 35-45 percent that reflects regional interests.

With respect to the MEC's share of the minimum requirements, the intent is that students learn about Spain as a nation in the Spanish language—particularly history and geography. In addition, the Ministry of Education has the right to establish the overall structure of the academic cycles (primary, secondary, and university preparatory education). Therefore, when students transfer to schools in other autonomous communities, they will find the same subjects (e.g., algebra, European history) taught in the same grades, and school credits are transferable.

Another constitutional balancing act was to satisfy the educational demands of the two warring political ideologies. The political left emphasized issues such as the right to a quality education for rich and poor alike, academic freedom, and the right for parents to participate in the management of local schools. The political right on the other hand emphasized management efficiency, the preservation of the cultural heritage, and the freedom to create publicly financed private schools (particularly religious schools).

As previously noted, these constitutional controls were put into place to guarantee that the decentralization process would function predictably within the limits of the defined national and regional authority. Consequently, this is how the controls should work (de jure). However, as will be discussed later, de facto these control mechanisms did not work as intended.

However, none of the changes introduced during the transition would make any difference unless the country began to mobilize the financial resources that would treat education as an investment rather than simply an expense.

Public Expenditure Increases

The promise of increased educational support under a constitutional democracy came true. The policy of the Franquist regime to shelter the elite classes from economic burdens quickly changed as the UCD (*Unión de Centro Democrático*) government under Adolfo Suárez enacted a package of taxation reforms that closed avenues for tax evasion and shifted an increased burden to the wealthy populations. Gunther's research on taxation reports that from 1975 to 1993 tax revenues as a percent of GDP increased from 19.5 to 31.5 percent. During those same years, the European OECD nations went from 32.7 to 38.7 percent, which means that comparatively speaking, Spain had almost reached the European average.[40]

[40] Gunther, Spanish Public Policy, pp. 4-6, 36.

The Constitution provided for two revenue-sharing mechanisms that promoted the redistribution of wealth to regional governments. The first was a block grant budget transfer to the decentralized regional governments to pay for those newly acquired tasks and resulting expenses previously controlled and paid for by the central government (e.g., police, education, transportation).

The second mechanism was the creation of an Inter-Territorial Compensation Fund (FCI) for transferring resources from the richer to the poorer regions. As an illustration of what these two transfers do for resource distribution in Spain, in 1996 the large and relatively poor autonomous community of Andalucía received 37.81 percent of state redistributed income and 39.91 percent of the FCI, while the wealthy Autonomous Community of Madrid received less than one percent of state redistributed income and nothing from the FCI.[41]

The important point is that the increase of tax receipts had a dramatic impact on education and its capacity to carry out a decentralization reform. Educational expenditures increased from 1.78 percent of GDP at the time of Franco's death to over 5 percent by 1996.[42] From the beginning of the transition through the mid-1990s, the growth in expenditures on education was greater than 2.3 times the growth in the GDP.[43]

The significant increase in educational finance supported a dramatic growth in public school construction and student enrollment, particularly in secondary schools. In 1975 there were approximately 1,100 public secondary schools, by 1980 almost 2,000 and by 1995 almost 3,000. With the school construction, enrollment expanded dramatically. By 1995 almost 100 percent of 15 year olds were in school, whereas at the end of the dictatorship only 44 percent of 15 year olds were in school.[44]

State Administrative Personnel

The complex political, economic, and social changes that were introduced during the transition placed great demands on the state administrative structure over a relatively short period of time. Spain was fortunate at that critical time to have in place a corps of professional career administrators. The spoils system had disappeared in Spain as early as 1918 and career appointment and promotion were based on merit and seniority. Miguel Beltrán writes, "The civil service has not undergone significant changes during the period of transition from Franco to democracy. The nonviolent, consensual nature of the process allowed the public administration system to remain outside the political arena, as a purely operational and professional sphere, ready to serve the gov-

[41] El Mundo, Anuario: 1997 (Madrid: Lerner, 1997), p. 280.
[42] El Mundo, Anuario, p. 278.
[43] CIDE, El sistema educativo Español, p. 228.

ernment that came to power in each election, no matter which party won. For the same reason [following Franco's death], there were no purges or political vendettas. . . ."[45]

In fact, many former Franco officials became key leaders in the democratization of Spain. Perhaps the most prominent figure was Adolfo Suárez, an important leader in Franco's National Movement who later became President of the Government during most of the transition.

The political pacts that formulated a climate of consensus among the political leaders also contributed to the continuity of the state bureaucratic apparatus. The civil servants demonstrated positive attitudes toward democracy similar to other citizens in Spain and supported rather than obstructed the transition.[46]

Thousands of state bureaucrats were transferred to the autonomous communities as power and resources were decentralized. Consequently, in education as well as the other sectors of government that had been transferred, there was a corps of experienced, professional administrators who were in place to make the changes work. The new regional management infrastructures played a major role in making the educational decentralization process work effectively and efficiently almost from the beginning. Many of the educational leaders interviewed reported that in a relatively short time the regional administrations were equal to or even more effective in managing their educational responsibilities than the Ministry of Education.

In sum, a generally peaceful and pragmatic transfer of power took place—from Franco's uncompromising centralized system of government to a democratic system where political compromise was the means and decentralization an end.[47] The transition was facilitated by the fact that no single center of power had the strength to dominate the decision-making process, and the political leadership of the nation (e.g., the monarchy and political party heads) came to agree on key priorities, such as the need to increase dramatically the resources, opportunity, and freedom for all

[44] CIDE, El sistema educativo Español, p. 214-15.
[45] Beltrán, "The History of the Administrative System," p. 260.
[46] Miguel Beltrán, "La reorganización de la estructura del estado (1982-1993)," en V Informe sociológico sobre la situación social en España, Vol. 1 (Madrid: Fundación FOESSA, 1994), pp. 558-59.
[47] A radical Basque terrorist group, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), has been the exception. Seeking separation from Spain for the Basque region, ETA has carried out several hundred political assassinations and kidnappings.

young people of a certain age to attend school. In the years to come, however, the "politics of compromise" which had greatly facilitated the transition faded as the political pendulum shifted to the left.

Part
3

Politics of the Left

In Spain, swings of the political pendulum drive changes in the trajectory of the educational system, and in 1982 the pendulum swung dramatically to the left.

Political Parties and Power

In 1982, as illustrated in Table 1, the socialist party (PSOE—*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) assumed an absolute majority in Congress and, with Felipe González as its charismatic leader, retained control for the next 14 years. The UCD (*Unión de Centro Democrático*) party, which had guided the nation through the transition, basically disappeared from the political map in 1982 due to serious internal divisions.

Table 1. National Election Results: House of Deputies (1979-1996)

	1979		1982		1986		1989		1993		1996	
Party	seats	% votes	seats	% votes	seats	% votes	seats	% votes	seats	% votes	seats	% votes
PP (AP)	10	6.1	105	26.5	105	26.3	107	25.9	141	34.8	156	38.7
PSOE	121	30.5	202	48.4	184	44.6	175	39.9	159	39.8	141	37.3
UCD	168	35.0	11	6.5								
IU	23	10.8	4	4.0	6	4.5	17	9.1	18	9.6	21	10.5
CiU	8	2.7	12	3.7	18	5.1	18	5.1	17	4.9	16	4.6
PNV	7	1.5	8	1.9	6	1.6	5	1.2	5	1.2	5	1.3
Others	13	13.4	8	9.0	31	17.9	28	18.8	10	10.7	11	7.6
Totals	350	100	350	100	350	100	350	100	350	100	350	100

Source: Joseph M. Vallès, Agustí Bosch, Sistemas electorales y gobierno representativo (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1997).
Legend: PP(AP)=Partido Popular (Alianza Popular); PSOE=Partido Socialista Obrero Español; UCD=Unión de Centro Democrático; IU=Izquierda Unida; CiU=Convergència i Unió; PNV=Partido Nacionalista Vasco

Unlike in the United States where the executive committees of the political party machinery serve as little more than money raising vehicles for funding elections, in Spain these party executive committees developed into oligarchic bodies that exercise forceful control over their party's legislative members. "Given deputies' dependence on their party," Paul Heywood writes, "political conformism tends to be the norm which in turn leads to the devaluation of parliament as a debating chamber. The system also creates large, multi-member constituencies, in which there is little direct relation between individual citizens and their representatives."[48]

[48] Heywood, The Government and Politics of Spain, p. 170.

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Political party leaders exercise firm control over their own elected officials at the national and regional levels. The elected officials of the party in power select the President of the Government (who also happens to head the party) and other senior government officials including the Minister of Education. Consequently, the political party in power directly shapes the processes of educational change through the legislators it controls in the parliament as well as the government officials it appoints to the Ministry of Education.

Educational Reform from the Political Left

The socialist party's philosophy of education was that the nation's schools should become powerful instruments of social change. Education was viewed as an instrument to forge social equality rather than social elitism by providing more school spaces, raising the quality of instruction, and establishing direct citizen participation in managing local school affairs. Also, the party's perception was that "many of the problems of the country stemmed from the deficient organization of the educational system and from the enormous power which the Catholic Church exercised over it."[49]

Universalization, modernization, democratization, and decentralization shaped the framework for three major educational reform laws passed by the socialist (PSOE) government.[50] Each of the laws tended to reinforce and deepen the commitment of the government to the political philosophy of the PSOE party.

The Right to Education (LODE) act of 1985 not only guarantees the rights and freedoms of education, but also carries out a constitutional commitment to decentralize education to the local level. As part of school democratization with decentralization, LODE required the creation of local councils with elected parent, teacher, and staff representation in every school in Spain. These councils are the maximum governing body with executive powers, and will be discussed in a later section.

The 1985 LODE act also created a second form of social participation with the formation of the State Educational Advisory Council (*Consejo Escolar del Estado*). This State Education Council, which will be discussed later, is made up of 80 members (mostly elected or appointed by constituent bodies) who are authorized to debate, critique and make suggestions on all educational proposals before they are enacted into law.

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[49] Juan José Sanchéz de Horcajo, "Church, State and Educational Reform," in Educational Reform in Democratic Spain, (ed.) O. Boyd-Barrett and P. O'Malley (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 195.

[50] The three laws were: LODE (1985), Ley Orgánica del Derecho a la Educación (Organic Law on the Right to Education); LOGSE (1990), Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (Law on the General Organization of the Educational System), and LOPEGCE (1995), Ley Orgánica de la Participación, la Evaluación, y el Gobierno de los Centros Docentes (Organic Law of Participation, Evaluation, and School Governance).

The 1990 LOGSE—Law on the General Organization of the Educational System—was the second and most controversial of the three socialist party laws. LOGSE initiated a global reorganization of the educational system as well as a comprehensive overhaul of the curriculum. Along with extending obligatory education to 16 years of age and reforming teacher training, a stage by stage reform of the system was undertaken which will only be completed by the year 2001. Additional decentralization was also programmed into the reform. The previously "closed" curriculum was "opened" to be more flexible and sufficiently decentralized to provide for regional and local inputs into the instructional program. As will be noted later, it is ironic that while a goal of LOGSE was to provide for an open and decentralized curriculum, this law became an excuse to block (until 1998) the transfer of authority to the remaining 10 autonomous communities still waiting to be decentralized.

Another provision of the LOGSE reform that was later to become extremely controversial was the provision that "the State shall provide the educational system as a whole with the necessary financial resources to fulfill what is established herein. . . ."[51] At the time, no one could be sure whether the economy could actually support the enormous resources required.

The third major piece of PSOE legislation was LOPEGCE (1995)—Organic Law Regulating the Participation, Evaluation and Governance of Schools. This law, which also will be discussed later in greater detail, was another forceful effort by the socialist government to deepen, broaden and reinforce the decentralization process at the school level consistent with its philosophy of providing greater equality and quality in education. More avenues of participation in school governance were opened to parents and students.

These three major educational laws passed by the powerful socialist (PSOE) party while it held the majority in the national Congress, were passed over stiff opposition. The Catholic hierarchy, for example, insisted that the laws attempted to substitute technical pragmatism for the moral character of religious teaching, and that religion should form part of the required core curriculum. The government, however, while agreeing to have religion taught in the schools, would only permit it as an elective rather than a requirement. The political right also opposed the laws not only because of perceived weakness of expressed moral values, but also because of the anticipated (but yet unknown) costs that would be incurred by reforms of such magnitude.

The teacher unions became the third major opponent. The public primary and secondary school teachers had traditionally run the day-to-day affairs of the schools within the broad guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Education. However, the decentralization laws now gave a major decision

[51] Part Two, "Additional Provisions of the Law." LOGSE, 1990.

making role to "non-professionals" (e.g., parents, students, staff members), and teachers objected forcefully to what they considered to be an intrusion into their house and a denigration of their professionalism.[52] One highly visible manifestation of their objection, to be discussed later, was the lack of teacher candidates seeking to become school directors in approximately half of the schools in Spain.

As will be noted later, the strong opposition of the political right had a significant impact on several dimensions of the decentralization process following the political pendulum's swing to the right in 1996. However, the biggest blow to the entire decentralization process came in 1987, and it was dealt by Spain's great promoter of decentralization, the socialist (PSOE) party.

Decentralization on Ice

In 1987 the socialist government unexpectedly announced that the decentralization of decision making authority would be suspended until the early 1990s, following the next national election. There was little immediate public outcry because of a general ambivalence of the population in some of these artificially created regions, but more specifically, most of these regional parliaments were also controlled by the PSOE party. They were not about to protest an action taken at the national level by their own party leaders.

The PSOE leadership gave several explanations for its action. The initial reason given was that the waiting regional governments were not sufficiently trained and organized to manage their own affairs, but privately they acknowledged that no provisions had been made to effect the transfer of authority. The next explanation was that the regional governments had adopted heterogeneous statutes regarding the type and amount of authority they would assume and this would complicate the functioning of the nation as a whole.[53]

The Ministry of Education argued that the delay was necessary because of its proposed top-to-bottom overhaul of the educational system, something that had not been done since 1970. The Law on the General Organization of the Education System (LOGSE), which was passed in 1990 and programmed as a series of yearly changes until 2001, was said to be too complicated to be carried out in the midst of decentralization activities going on at the same time.

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[52] Antoni J. Colom, Emilia Dominguez, Introducción a la política de la educación (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1995), pp. 130-55.

[53] Manuel de Puelles Benítez, "La política educativa del Estado autonómico," Política y educación (Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 1995), pp. 102-108; Puelles Benítez, "Educación y autonomía," pp. 178-79.

No doubt there was some validity in all of the expressed reasons for the delay in decentralization. However, they tended to be bureaucratic, organizational, and management-related reasons which argued that the present time was too conflicted with competing demands to carry forward major decentralization changes. These reasons ignored the fact that an efficient decentralization process had already taken place in several autonomous communities during the extraordinary complex period of the transition, a time when the entire nation was adapting to democracy after 40 years of dictatorship.

Two political hypotheses may also help explain the decentralization suspension. At the core of the socialist party's philosophy is that government is a tool of the people to improve their socio-economic quality of life. That is what the PSOE government saw as its mandate when elected to an absolute majority in the Congress in 1982. However, if power and budget continued to be systematically transferred to the regions, the central government would be weakened to the point that it might not possess sufficient power to execute its policies. For a socialist party leadership pursuing programs of social reform and economic development, more power had greater attraction than less power.

The second political hypothesis is even more pragmatic. The winter of 1987, when decentralization was suspended, was a winter of discontent in Spain. The country was wracked with massive strikes in hospitals, schools, universities, airlines and the 21 percent unemployment rate was the highest in Europe. The political position of the PSOE party was weakening across the nation, and it sensed a possible loss of the absolute majority it held in some of the eight regional parliaments it controlled. In this context, the PSOE party had no interest in decentralizing authority and budget to other political parties.

In April 1987, two months before parliamentary elections in the autonomous communities, a quiet pre-emptive strike took place that suspended the decentralization process.[54] The June elections soon proved that the PSOE government had assessed the situation correctly when the party lost its absolute majority in four of the eight regional parliaments it controlled.[55] Thus, while both organizational and political forces were at work to cause the suspension of the decentralization process in 1987, the outcome was clear. The political party which had done so much to open the door to decentralization had now closed it.

[54] The exception to this suspension was the Autonomous Community of Navarra which for historical reasons received "fast track" decentralized authority.
[55] Francesc Pallarés, "Las elecciones autonómicas en España: 1980-1992," (ed.) Pilar del Castillo, Comportamiento político y electoral (Madrid: Academia, 1995), ca. 5.

Decentralization Unfrozen

By 1992 conditions were again changing. Demands for the remaining 10 regional parliaments to receive decision-making authority had steadily increased. Interestingly enough, the instrument that reinitiated the decentralization process was a political pact, not a legislative act, signed by the leaders of the two dominant political parties, PSOE and P.P. (*Partido Popular*), and the President of the Government. The pact is interesting because it highlights two important points: that real power resides in the hands of the dominant political parties rather than the government, and that both parties were now ready to complete the decentralization process. The political agreement and the legislation which followed a few months later focused on equalizing, rationalizing, and homogenizing the degree and type of authority to be assumed by all 17 regional parliaments. This would eliminate what was called "discrimination and disfunctionalities" between the autonomous communities.[56]

The official explanation for initiating the decentralization process once again was that the 10 remaining regional parliaments wanted the transfer of power to take place, and that the many years of experience already gained would benefit their actions. A second explanation is also feasible. As noted previously, the height of political power for the PSOE party had been in 1982, and since then its majority control over the Congress of Deputies and the regional parliaments had been slipping steadily (see Table 1). By 1989 the socialist government at the national level at times had to bargain with other parties for legislative support. In 1993 PSOE lost its absolute majority in the Congress of Deputies and in the 1996 elections it finally gave up control to the center-right Popular Party.

By 1992, with a clear downward trend in evidence, the PSOE party finally reached the point where it was no longer a good political strategy to drag its feet on decentralizing to the remaining 10 regions. The party had already lost political control over so many regional parliaments that it was good politics to support the increasingly popular decentralization movement. The socialist party read the political situation correctly because in the 1996 elections it won majority control over only three of the 17 regional parliaments. The Popular Party (P.P.) also supported decentralization in regional government and in education, but with different goals in mind.

[56] The political pact was entitled, "Texto Acuerdos Autonómicos del 28 de febrero de 1992," and the legislation was "Ley Orgánica 9/1992."

Part
4

Politics of the Right: 1996-1999

Because of a historical identification with the Franco regime, the political right only became a serious force in Spanish politics in the 1993 elections (see Table 1) when the *Partido Popular* (Popular Party) was able to advance its cause by capitalizing on a bad economy, corruption, and scandals in the socialist government. In 1996 the political pendulum finally swung to the right when the Popular Party (P.P.) by a thin margin, plus the support of a Catalan regional party (CiU - *Convergència i Unió*), took control of the national Congress of Deputies. As soon to be noted, by 1996 democracy had been institutionalized and Spain had become a nation of laws and not people. The P.P. party quickly found that the change in government did not mean that the existing laws and educational programs it had originally opposed could be thrown out easily.

The Education Wars

During the 1996 election campaign the field of education became a political battleground as both major parties fiercely attacked one another's policies. The socialist party (PSOE) tried to link the P.P. with the educational evils of the Franco regime, while P.P. attacked PSOE's policies as ideological dogmatic indoctrination that had failed the nation's youth since 1982.[57]

One year after taking office the P.P. Minister of Education, Esperanza Aguirre, published an extraordinary speech which highlighted the educational differences (as well as bitterness) between the parties of the political left and the political right. She argued that the pedagogical trend established by the socialist (PSOE) government had been "unnatural, systematic and lethal," based on the philosophy that the state can decide better than parents what is best for their children.

Minister Aguirre publicly attacked the two crown jewels of the socialist party's educational legislation, LODE and LOGSE, calling them "acts of fatal arrogance." She argued that by prescribing the content, method, and outcomes of teaching and learning in an effort to achieve equality of opportunity, the quality of the educational process had been reduced by the PSOE party to its lowest common denominator. "Fortunately," the Minister continued, "the majority of the teachers, faithful

[57] Partido Popular, "La cultura: herencia y proyecto," Con la nueva mayoría (P.P. party platform document, undated but probably 1994).

to their duties, have consistently declined to participate in the destruction of their own educational mission."[58] Immediately, newspapers across Spain carried headlines stating that the Minister of Education congratulated the teachers who turned their backs on the PSOE reforms.

The educational philosophy of the political right incorporated the following concepts: efficiency, the professionalization of teachers, administrative training and career paths for managers, increased research and development, academic emphasis on the humanities, and the preservation of the cultural heritage. The political right once again placed religion at the center of the cultural heritage when the Popular Party platform announced the goal of "establishing an effective collaboration between the public powers and the Catholic Church which is indispensable for the conservation of Spain's historic patrimony."[59]

The concepts of liberty and quality are central to the educational program. Liberty means freedom for parents to choose which school (public, private or religious) they want their children to attend—all financed with public funds. With this freedom of choice, the rationale goes, schools would have to compete for students, and the competition to attract students would be a natural force to improve the quality of education. Bad schools would be forced to change or go out of existence.

The Popular Party was publicly committed to completing the decentralization process by 1998, and upon assuming office reluctantly committed itself to funding the additional US$1.5 billion expenditure that the LOGSE reform still required prior to its completion in 2001. As noted previously, the reform law committed the central government to paying the additional costs rather than passing them on to the regional governments. However, in July of 1997 the Minister of Education held the first session with regional leaders to plan for the decentralization process. At the meeting the Minister announced that the government had decided to transfer educational responsibility to the regions, but without the national money to pay for it. Instead, the additional taxing authority that was being transferred to the regional parliaments could be used to pay the additional educational costs.

This announcement had at least two serious implications for education. First, the additional tax funds being transferred from the central government to the decentralized regions might not be sufficient to cover the additional expenditures. Second, the money would be transferred in the form of a block grant, and the regional governments could spend it on any public sector program (of which education was only one of many).

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[58] Esperanza Aguirre, "Educación y cultura: Calida y libertad," 26 de mayo de 1997, p. 6. (Speech given at the Club Siglo XXI, Madrid.)
[59] Partido Popular, "La cultura," p. 89.

The outcry from the regional educational authorities was immediate and fierce. Some called it the birth of a historic debt, others declared it to be economic suicide, some said their regions would refuse the transfer of authority under these conditions.[60]

In contrast to the transition from autocratic to democratic government in the late 1970s, when co-operation and compromise were the essential ingredients to an effective political change, the transition of political power between PSOE on the left and P.P. on the right was loud, vitriolic, uncompromising, and often very personal. The Minister of Education was unabashedly free in her strong criticism of virtually everything that had been done in education by the PSOE party, and Felipe González (former PSOE head of party and President of the Government) liked to refer to her (whose first name is Esperanza—which means "hope") as "Sinesperanza" which means "hopeless."

Why was the relatively steady transition from General Franco's regime to the democratic leadership so different than the turbulent transition in 1996 between the political left and the political right? Perhaps the overriding reason is that in the Spanish political culture, democracy was by now an established fact. The politicians and the public knew that a shift in government control, something seen coming as a trend in previous elections, would not result in massive social unrest or military intervention. Outside the political arena, the various party leaders were often personal friends. Within the context of this maturing democracy, the serious negotiations resulting in political pacts between the various centers of power that had marked the transition following the death of Franco never took place in 1996. The voting public knew that if the Popular Party won the election, a break with the socialist government policies of the past would take place.

In the field of education, an interesting outcome resulting from the shift in government control from the political left to the right was that the new P.P. government was obligated to continue carrying forward the socialist party's educational reforms because they were the law of the land. The Minister of Education publicly and repeatedly voiced her party's frustration at having to enforce LODE and LOGSE education reform laws that her Popular Party had so strenuously campaigned against. The new government's having to enforce laws that it opposed, something unthinkable during the Franco era, was a clear indication that Spain was now a nation of laws and not of people.

[60] Carlos Arroyo, "El Gobierno quiere traspasar la educación sin desembolsar el dinero extra prometido," El País, 10 de julio de 1997.

With the change in government, the intent to decentralize educational responsibility by 1999 to the remaining 10 autonomous communities remained a goal of both parties based upon a political pact dating back to 1992.

Part
5

Decentralized Regions

With the transfer of educational authority to the first 7 regions in the 1980s, changes began to take place that showed the regions taking control over their own affairs and fiercely resisting what they considered to be central government intrusions into areas no longer its responsibility.

The Constitution of 1978 created regional governmental structures with their own legislative and executive powers that can be exercised following the permanent transfer of formal authority. Consequently, the regional governments can establish their own priorities and legislate directly (within the framework of the transferred authority and their own statutes of autonomy) without authorization from the central government.

Educational Finance

As the functions once carried out by the central government were transferred to the autonomous communities, the funding to carry out the activities was also transferred. In 1981, for example, the ratio of central government to regional government expenditures was 87 to 13 percent; by 1994, it was 65 to 35 percent;[61] and in 1999 the projection was 51 to 49 percent.

The fund transfers go to the decentralized regions in the form of tax-sharing block grants; that is, the resources are not earmarked for specific programs. Additional regional sources of income are also available, such as service fees, property taxes, the Inter-territorial Compensation Fund (FCI), as well as direct borrowing. The decentralized autonomous communities establish their own public expenditure budget priorities, and as a result some regions fund education at a much higher level than others.

An informative study contrasts 1980 with 1992 per capita student expenditures above and below the grand mean of the 17 autonomous communities. During this time span, five of the seven decentralized regions increased and two decreased their education expenditures in relation to the grand mean of the 17. Some increases were quite dramatic: the Basque Country went from 4.05

[61] Secretaría de Estado para las Administraciones Territoriales, Informe económico-financiero de las Administraciones Territoriales en 1994 (Madrid: Ministerio para las Administraciones Públicas, 1995), p. 41.

percent above the grand mean in 1980 to 20.44 percent above in 1992; the Canary Islands went from 1.99 to 16.67 percent above. Valencia, in contrast, decreased from -6.40 to -8.59 percent below the mean during that 12 year period. Of the 10 regions under control of the Ministry of Education during the 1980 to 1992 period, seven lost ground to the mean of the 17 regions. The variations around the grand mean of the still centralized regions controlled by the MEC were not nearly as great as the decentralized regions.

No doubt there were numerous contributing factors to the shifts in educational expenditures of both the centralized and decentralized regions (e.g., student population growth, regional economic development), but the likelihood is that the ability to set public expenditure priorities in the decentralized regions accounted for a significant measure of the educational spending fluctuations in those regions.[62]

Along with changes in the patterns of educational finance, educational decentralization had an important impact on academic programs.

The Crisis of the Humanities

In Spain's effort to decentralize both the governmental and educational systems, nothing proved to be innocent—not even history or culture. As noted previously, the so-called "minimums" established that 65 percent of the curriculum (55 percent in regions with their own language) would reflect a national focus and 35 percent be determined by the individual autonomous communities. When the Popular Party of the political right took power in 1996, the new government expressed concerns that the 1990 LOGSE legislation passed under the socialist (PSOE) government permitted too much discretion on the part of the autonomous communities. Many of them, particularly Catalonia and the Basque Country, were not meeting the minimum obligation toward teaching the national view of Spain.

The Ministry of Education was concerned, for example, that students were starting to have difficulty transferring from a school in one region to a school in another region because specific subjects were beginning to be taught at different grade levels. Individual regions were beginning to insist that if textbooks were to be approved for their schools, the books had to give special attention to the authors, geographical detail, culture, and language of the region. In some instances, even textbooks in mathematics, a subject that is typically considered culturally neutral, had to be "regional-

[62] E. Uriel, M.L. Moltó, F. Pérez, J. Aldás, V. Cucarella, Las cuentas de la educación en España y sus comunidades autónomas 1980-1992 (Madrid: Fundación Argentaria, 1997), pp. 177-78.

ized." For example, when measuring distance from one city to another, the regional government purchasing the books insisted that the two cities chosen be from within its own territory.

The particular concern of *Partido Popular* and Minister of Education Aguirre was the content and teaching of the humanities; specifically the subjects of history, culture, Spanish literature, classical languages, geography, and the Spanish language. Just as these subjects proved to be at the core of a major struggle during the transition from General Franco's autocratic regime to democracy, a similar controversy arose with the transition of power from the PSOE party on the left to the P.P. party on the right. The issues are critical because through its history, language, and culture, a nation defines itself.

Fulfilling a political promise of the 1996 election, on October 22, 1997 the Minister of Education announced a decree revising the content in the secondary schools of that portion of the humanities curriculum (Spanish language, literature, history and geography) under control of the Ministry of Education. The MEC could legitimately do this because it is responsible for 65 percent of the instructional material included in programs of study.

The changes required were neither minimal nor inconsequential. The teaching of national history, for example, went from 25 to 174 topics, and the discretion of interpretation previously afforded the autonomous communities was sharply limited. This reconstitution of the national minimum requirements, the Minister argued, could all be accomplished in the same amount of time, with the same textbooks, and would in no way threaten the precepts of academic freedom in the classroom.[63] Also, for the first time, copies of the textbooks selected for use in the schools in the various autonomous communities were to be sent to the Ministry of Education for what was called "informative reasons." Several autonomous community spokespersons immediately attacked this new MEC policy as "censorship," a charge with serious historical implications in Spain.

Because the MEC had not previously consulted with the autonomous communities, the nation was caught by surprise; according to headlines around the country, the announcement "fell like a bomb." The reaction was turbulent and visceral, particularly in the historic regions as well as those regions politically controlled by the PSOE party. The new policy was attacked as being technically flawed, prejudicial to the historic regions, ideologically based, politically inspired, reactionary, reminiscent of the 1950s, unscientific, lacking in pedagogical rigor, a tasteless act of disrespect for teachers, a return to centralist thinking, and so forth. Particular scorn targeted a softening of descriptive language from what had been referred to as "the period of the dictatorship" to new language calling it "the era of Franco ."

[63] El Pais, October 28, 1997, p. 30.

Beyond the rather routine political party insults that tended to accompany each new initiative in the national parliament, this new policy (called a royal decree) touched a political nerve so sensitive that for a time it threatened to topple the P.P. government. Two contrasting interpretations of Spanish history were (and are) at the root of the tension, particularly for the historic regions. These perceptions are: the eternal, immutable, traditional Spain versus the pluralistic, multi-cultural, modern Spain. Just as the nation defines itself by its history, so do many of the regions.

As previously discussed, before Spain was formed in the 15th century some of the geographical territories once existed as independent kingdoms with their own languages, cultures, and traditions. These historic regions, which prize their semi-independence, feel easily threatened by central government actions, and react accordingly.[64] A point to note is the dramatic political role an educational issue played in a major conflict between the national and regional governments.

The issue reached crisis proportions in October of 1997 when Jordi Pujol, President of the Catalan government and head of the CiU party, declared that his region would practice civil disobedience and absolutely refuse to implement the new humanities policy. In addition, he threatened to pull his small faction of seats (16 total) out of an alliance with the P.P. (156 total) in the national Congress of Deputies (350 total seats) if the humanities policy was not changed substantially.[65] Such a threat was not inconsequential because the CiU Party provided the P.P. with a thin balance-of-power majority over the PSOE (141 seats). The CiU withdrawal could cause the P.P. government to fall.

Political opposition spread until December 16, 1997 when the Congress of Deputies voted 181 to 151 to recommend that the entire plan be rejected. The P.P. delegates stood alone in the vote, having been abandoned by all other political parties. A report of the event states that the combative Minister of Education, Esperanza Aguirre, left the chamber in near tears amidst cries of "resign" from the opposing members.[66] Discussions to revise the humanities law were an outgrowth of this political confrontation.

In March 1998, a Congress of Professors of Contemporary Spanish History met and made a point that seemed to escape almost everyone else; that is, those who actually teach Spanish history had fundamentally been excluded from participating in the humanities episode. The debate had really been a battle among and between politicians at the national and regional levels who no doubt had strong sentiments but less than a comprehensive knowledge of Spanish history. With respect to

[64] The exception among the historic regions in this case was the autonomous community of Galicia, an agricultural region which tends not to be politically aggressive, and in 1996 was in the camp of the P.P. party that controlled the central government.
[65] El Pais, October 26, 1997.

this "crisis of the humanities," the centralization vs. decentralization issue in government and education played a very large role.

[66] El Pais, December 17, 1997, p. 26.

Part
6

Decentralized Schools

In Spain, the questions of "who governs the schools at the local level," and "what is the role of the school director" have perplexed the country since the Civil War. Under the regime of General Franco, the Ministry of Education controlled the schools through the school director acting as its agent. When a school showed any signs of disobedience, a "loyal" director would often be sent in from the outside to reestablish control over the situation.

During the early post-Franco years, for the selection of directors, the teachers of a school would list in priority order the names of three teachers at their school who would be acceptable candidates. The higher administrative authority would typically approve the first name on the list. Significantly, this process placed the teachers of each school in control of the local administrative and academic processes, and they jealously guarded these responsibilities in the name of "educational professionalism." While this process of school governance might have met a strict definition of school decentralization, it did not meet the requirements of school democratization.

School-Based Management (1985-1995): De Jure

The Constitution of 1978 (Art. 27.7) states, "The teachers, parents and, in some instances, students can intervene in the control and management of the schools supported by the Government with public funds." In 1985, as part of its mission to use the schools as instruments of social change with an end of social equality, the socialist (PSOE) government passed the LODE act. Thus, this law "establishes a system of participation without precedent in Spain by introducing a scheme of democratic government in the schools where all sectors of society have the right to decide about issues of organization, pedagogy and educational finance."[67]

School Councils

Throughout Spain, the cornerstone of democratic participation in education is the election of local school councils. These councils, which form the core of school-based management (SBM), are based on the premises that in every school: (a) an elected school council is the maximum govern-

[67] CIDE, El sistema educativo Español: 1995, p. 46

ing authority; (b) academic programs can be designed to support the unique cultural, linguistic, and economic development needs of its own local community and region, (c) the autonomous nature of the council's authority will result in breaking up the traditional uniformity of the educational system, and (d) the council's governance process will be politically neutral.[68]

Council membership varies according to regional legislation but typically is made up of the school director, chief of academic studies, an equal representation of teachers and parents (elected every two years by their peers), and sometimes a student, staff, and city government representative. A council's functions include the formulation of the school's academic program and extracurricular activities, election of the school's director, admission of pupils, decisions on disciplinary action, and approval of the budget.[69]

The School Director

Under the LODE law, a school director is elected by an absolute majority vote of the school council members and can be fired by a two-thirds majority. Only teachers from that specific school are eligible. Teachers who become candidates for the position must propose a program that outlines their ideas about what they would do to improve the school. These proposed changes might target a range of development activities in diverse areas as student discipline, in-service training, curricular content, and so forth. With the election of a school director, that individual and the council members are committed to collectively carrying out the proposed program for the three year election period. A school director can be reelected only once and then must return to his/her role as a classroom teacher. If there are no teacher candidates for school director, or no candidate obtains an absolute majority of council members' votes, then a higher administrative authority appoints the school director for a period of one year.

A chief responsibility of the role is to execute the policies of the school council. The director is the school's official representative, and maximum authority within the school, who manages activities on a day-to-day basis. That is, he/she manages the school budget, the personnel issues, and along with the chief of academic studies, the teaching/learning process. No management training is required to be eligible for the position.

In terms of incentives, school directors receive a stipend from US $80.00 to $500.00 per month depending on the size and academic level of the school. Also, directors teach approximately half

[68] For a discussion of basic differences between the Spanish and American versions of SBM, see: Mark Hanson, "School-Based Management and Educational Reform in the USA and Spain," Comparative Education Review 34, no. 4 (1990): 523-37.
[69] LODE (1985), art. 42.

the hours of a regular teacher.[70] In terms of how the decentralization process was intended to effect the local schools (de jure), the goal was to create an educational system based on the democratic precepts of election and representation, and the management percepts of pedagogical development and organizational efficiency.

School-based Management (1985-1995): De Facto

As noted previously, the successful practice of school-based management depends on at least three conditions: (1) the democratic election of parents and teachers on a council which is the maximum governing body in the school, (2) the council's election of the school director from among teacher candidates for the job, and (3) the preparation and execution of a school development plan. In most countries teachers aspire to school leadership positions. In Spain, as pointed out in Table 2, the history of SBM reflects an enormous difficulty in finding teachers willing to be candidates for election to the school director position at both the elementary and secondary school levels.[71] Where no candidates presented themselves (often close to 50 percent of the schools), a teacher from those schools would be assigned to a one year appointment by a higher administrative authority.[72]

Table 2. Percent of Public School Directors Elected vs. Appointed

	1985-1986		1988-1989		1991-1992		1993-1994		1995-1996		1996-1997		1997-1998	
	E	A	E	A	E	A	E	A	E	A	E	A	E	A
General Elementary (Grades 1-8)	63	37	53	47	46	54	30	69	62	37	54	46	29	71
Academic Secondary (Grades 9-12)	73	27	62	38	50	50	51	49	67	32	55	45	45	55

Source: Consejo Escolar del Estado, *Informe sobre el estado y situación del sistema educativo* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia), 1991, p. 89; 1993, p. 34; 1998, p. 321; 1999, p. 377
Legend: E = % Elected; A = % Appointed

The percentages of teachers and parents voting to select their representatives on the council also reflects a serious problem impacting on the democratization of local schools. Since the first election in the 1985-86 academic year, over 90 percent of the teachers at the elementary and secondary levels have voted to select their council representatives. However, the parent voting pattern to elect parent council representatives reflects a constant downward trend. In 1985-86, 45 percent

[70] F. Javier Murillo Torrecilla, Raquel Barrio Hernández, Maria José Pérez-Albo, La Dirección escolar: Análisis e investigación (Madrid: CIDE, 1999), p. 22-3.
[71] Consejo Escolar del Estado, Informe sobre el estado y situación del sistema educativo (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia), 1991, p. 89; 1993, p. 34; 1998, p. 331.
[72] The data on school director elections and teacher and parent voting patterns reflect those schools within the territory administered by the MEC. However, Murillo Torecilla et al., report that the schools in decentralized regions report similar patterns. p. 209.

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of the parents voted; by 1991-92 that figure had fallen to 10 percent, and by 1996-97 it was reduced to six percent.

Many reasons were offered in interviews with parents to explain this low level of parent voting: potential parent voters do not know the parent candidates running for election; parents lack information about specific technical and pedagogical issues affecting the school; teachers are organized and assertive in controlling council decisions; parent members are relatively powerless and serve as little more than rubber stamps; and parents fear that opposing the ideas of teachers will affect the treatment of their children.

Year after year, the State School Council in Spain has expressed its alarm over the situation by statements as, "it is evident that the democratization of school director elections is not being supported by those individuals who inherently should be assuming the responsibility."[73] J. Sarramona explains this problematic situation by arguing that democracy in Spain is still young and all parties in the educational community--parents and teachers--need to learn the "habits of social participation" that lead to a common culture of perception and understanding of educational affairs.[74]

The reasons why such a large percentage of schools have failed to produce teacher candidates for school director are many and varied. The core of the problem springs from a major shift in authority and responsibility. From the post-Franco era to 1985, the school director was selected by the teachers and represented their values and interests in dealings with the MEC hierarchy as well as local parents. With the introduction of SBM, the director was charged with becoming the MEC's administrative representative in the school, the council's representative toward the MEC, the parents and the teachers, and still the teacher's representative toward all other parties. This new arrangement put the director in the middle of three competing, often conflicting, centers of power.

The problem of being caught in the middle can be seen in such instances as when a school council instructs the director to purchase equipment or initiate an educational program determined by the MEC to be outside the authority of the school, or when the MEC instructs the director to identify the names of teachers who are conducting an unauthorized strike and the school council instructs the director not to comply.

A second major contributor to the lack of candidates for school director was that under the 1985 LODE law the director was really a teacher on a three year temporary administrative assignment.

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[73] Consejo Escolar del Estado, Informe sobre el estado y situación del sistema educativo: Curso 1993-94 (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1993), p. 36.

[74] Jaume Sarramona, "Participación democrática en la educación" (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1995), p. 28.

No training for the position was required, and upon completion of the election cycle that individual was returned to the classroom in the same school. For any elected school director, exercising leadership in attempting to introduce the school's new development plan entails supervising, directing and even sanctioning his/her teacher friends and colleagues. The potential for organizational conflict leading to serious personal stress was ever present.

The potential for conflict was heightened by a tradition of a school culture which held that the teachers as professionals were the true guardians of the school. As Teresa Bardisa Ruiz writes, "the teachers, in general, manifested certain reticence to view the school as belonging to the community. There were even those who would considered it 'treasonous' when the director would choose to accept the proposals or support of parents, or other social agents, rather than those offered by teachers."[75]

In a 1997 study of teachers in 534 public and private secondary schools, conducted by the National Institution of Educational Science (INCE), 52 percent held the opinion that teachers alone should elect the director, 31 percent felt that the school council should do the electing, and less than five percent felt that higher administrative authorities should appoint the director.[76] Interestingly, as Table 2 indicates, because of the lack of teacher candidates for election, higher administrative authorities have been appointing about 50 percent of the directors since school-based management began.

Another source of stress can be attributed to the ambiguity of the mandate given to the elected director. In a study conducted during the period in question, interviews of teachers and directors found that the desire to introduce quality improvements through a development plan was only one reason, and not necessarily the most important, behind specific voting patterns in an election. Other reasons given were that "the candidate for [director] happened to be: a personal friend; someone who wanted to keep things the way they were; an individual who wanted to back the proposals of a specific group (e.g., irate parents, conservative teachers, cultural minority); or a teacher who was primarily interested in challenging MEC policies."[77] Thus, when the newly elected director tried to move the school in a specific direction, resistance or conflict often came from those who had supported other goals.

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[75] Teresa Bardisa Ruiz, "La dirección escolar: Conflictos y resistencias," en De aquí y de allá: Textos sobre la institución educativa y su dirección, compiladora G. Frigerio (Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1995), p. 70.
[76] INCE (Instituto Nacional de Calidad y Evaluación), Funcionamiento de los centros: Diagnóstico del sistema educativo - 1997 (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1998), p. 27.
[77] E. Mark Hanson and Carolyn Ulrich, "Democracy, Decentralization and School-Based Management in Spain," La educación: Revista Interamericana de desarrollo educativo, No. 118 (1994): 327.

Finally, when returning to the classroom in the same school at the end of the election cycle, the former director would encounter a loss of status, authority, the administrative stipend, and quite possibly bad feelings among other teachers resentful of actions previously taken. In addition, the long hours and hard work given to the job would find little lasting recognition from any quarter. Clearly, the gap between what was intended de jure and what had resulted de facto with the Spanish school-based management model required that something be done.

Mid-Course Corrections (1995 and Continuing)

By the mid-1990s, 10 years after SBM had been initiated, clear evidence existed that the experiment in local school democracy was in deep trouble. The outstanding, unresolved issue was how to balance effectively the executive functions of the director, the community's democratic participation in school governance, and the regional and national educational frameworks established by higher administrative authorities. If a more effective balance could be found than that established in 1985, the expectation was that the other problem, such as the lack of teacher candidates for director, would resolve themselves.

Increased Authority

In 1995 the Spanish government bundled together several changes to the existing school-based management model and passed the Organic Law of Participation, Evaluation, and School Governance (LOPEGSE). Reducing the degree to which the director was caught between competitive centers of power (the MEC, school council, the teachers), the new legislation assigned to the director increased authority over personnel, financial and administrative matters, as well as authority to select his/her own management team, items which had previously resided with the council. In addition, individual schools were granted greater degrees of autonomy with respect to the earlier power-sharing arrangement with the Ministry of Education. Consequently, under the 1995 legislation the director emerged with considerably more power than when the SBM reform began.

Leadership Training

Under the 1985 LODE law, the position of director was conceived of as a teacher, with no specific training, temporarily holding the school's top leadership position. With the 1995 LOPEGSE law, an effort was made to establish an administrative career where training would be required, a pool of trained educational leaders would evolve, and valuable management experience could be retained in the system.

The new career orientation begins with what the Spanish call "accreditation." That is, all teachers aspiring to become school directors must first take and pass a training program established by

higher (regional or national) educational authority (Art. 19). An accreditation committee was created to monitor and ultimately certify candidates that fulfilled all requirements. As training programs developed in the various autonomous communities and the MEC, they varied significantly in content and hours of instruction (e.g., from 60 to 150 hours).

An evaluation of the various training programs reports that "in the majority of the [autonomous communities] the content of these courses focus fundamentally on formal aspects of schools (organizational structure, administrative functions, tasks, legislation, etc.) giving little attention to issues as school climate, communication processes, decision making, or conflict resolution."[78] Universities in cooperation with regional governments also developed educational management degree or certificate programs (250 to 500 hours), but with a greater social-science, school restructuring, and pedagogical renewal orientation.

The maximum amount of time a director could serve as a school's leader was extended from three years plus the possibility of one reelection (six years maximum) to four years plus two reelections (12 years maximum). The motive behind the change was to give greater stability to the job and permit a program of planned change to run its course. The limit on the time any director could serve on the job in a single school was established in deference to those who argued that energy and enthusiasm for the task in the same school would eventually run down. As part of the career orientation, and in an effort to retain valuable management experience, the new law opened up avenues for school directors to move upward into the hierarchy of senior leadership roles at the provincial, autonomous community, and ministry levels.

Lack of Director Candidates

Under the 1985 LODE law any director had to come from the ranks of teachers in that school. Also, if no teachers presented themselves as candidates, higher administrative authority would appoint a teacher to be director for one year with another election scheduled the next year. With the 1995 law, a teacher would be appointed as director for the same amount of time as an elected director—four years. This change was in part made to give some stability to the role and to permit the school council to begin a development program with some longevity. In addition, the change was in recognition of the fact that numerous teachers would like to present themselves as candidates for school director but the school culture, with its negative orientation about a colleague wanting to become a superior authority, prevented them from applying. Appointing these teachers would take the onus off their elevation to the leadership role.

[78] Murillo Torrecilla, Barrio Hernández, Pérez-Albo, p. 52.

As noted in Table 2, the first school director elections following the introduction of accreditation requirements (1995-96) saw a significant increase in school councils electing directors. More teachers were willing to be candidates. However, in the 1996-97 elections, the proportion elected reverted slightly downward. What the pattern will ultimately be is yet to be seen.

In sum, in 1978, three years after the death of General Franco, the process of democratization in government (and education) began to spread to regional levels with the transfer of authority, responsibility, and resources. In 1985 the democratization of education spread, with a major reform bringing school-based management to the school level. Significantly, 10 years after the introduction of SBM, based on lessons learned through experience, mid-course corrections were made. The willingness to make periodic adjustments to the decentralization reform since it began in the late 1970s is one important reason why continued (albeit stuttering) progress has been made.

Part 7

Binding the Nation Together: De Jure vs. De Facto Reform

The framers of the Spanish Constitution realized that a mechanism must be introduced that provided for an educational system that was both differentiated and integrated. As Joan Gallego phrased this task, "the political and administrative system of the Spanish State must guarantee the unity of the educational system, which may be provided and administered in each autonomous community with different educational programmes, priorities and objectives. . . ."[79] There are at least six such mechanisms that are intended to tie the 17 parts of the educational system into a whole. Each can be contrasted in terms of how they should operate (de jure) with how they do operate (de facto).

Diplomas

The Constitution provides that only the state can issue academic and professional degrees that are valid throughout the nation. If any autonomous community or even an individual school is persistent in not following national education policies, the Ministry of Education is authorized to withhold graduation diplomas from those involved (de jure). However, de facto the threat to withhold graduation diplomas has proven to be empty. Interviews with numerous senior administrators at the MEC and in the regions revealed no historic memory of this particular sanction ever being exercised. In practical terms, punishing students because of legal infractions of educational administrators (or their political leaders) would be politically unacceptable in most sectors of Spanish society.

Ministry of Education Inspectors

The Constitution created a Central Inspectorate charged with "control and supervision, from the pedagogical and organizational point of view, of the operation of educational establishments, public and private..." and ensuring that they meet the minimum requirements under control of the MEC.[80] De jure, the central inspectors are supposed to have free access to any establishment or docu-

[79] Joan C. Gallego Herrera, "Education in the State of Autonomous Communities," in Education Reform in Democratic Spain, (eds.) O. Boyd and P. O'Malley (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 107.
[80] CIDE, Spanish Education System: 1996, Summary (Madrid, Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996), p. 29.

mentation they feel is necessary to carry out their tasks. At least two central inspectors, who report to the MEC, are assigned to each autonomous community.

On the surface, these central inspectors would appear to be powerful individuals. However, their de facto power is negligible. Part of the limitation is in the numbers. With hundreds of schools in each autonomous community, two MEC inspectors have neither the time nor budget to seriously survey schools for infractions of national law or policy. Even more significant, in interviews these central inspectors stress that they are not permitted to make any school inspections without first obtaining permission of the chief educational officer of the region. Consequently, the inspectors reported that their principal function is to remain in their offices and be available if someone (perhaps a parent, teacher, or school director) wants to complain or report an infraction of one of the national minimum requirements.

On those occasions when a central inspector receives a complaint or has evidence that an autonomous community is not fulfilling its commitments to national policy, the inspector has no authority to take independent action. He or she is limited to forwarding the allegation to the Ministry of Education, and thus serves principally as a channel of communication. If the MEC concludes that a significant problem exists in an autonomous community, the Minister of Education is the only one with the authority to establish direct contact and bring pressure for changing the practice. The Minister typically has little time for this type of activity. Consequently, as a mechanism of integrating Spain's educational system, even at the level of enforcing the national minimum requirements, the Central Inspectorate is extremely weak.

National Minimum Requirements (Minimos)

The Spanish Constitution requires that the educational system reinforce the "one nation" concept while also authorizing regionally oriented education. The de jure mechanism that ensures the national focus is the so-called minimum requirements, which are supposed to control 65 percent of the academic instruction in each autonomous community (55 percent in the regions with their own languages). As noted, the Central Inspectorate is charged with enforcing the national minimums, but without the tools to do so effectively.

Most of the regions, particularly those which were artificially created with no historic traditions of their own, tend to respect routinely these minimum requirements. However, the historic regions, as well as those under the control of opposing political parties, are at times quite prepared to challenge the central government's interpretation of the minimums. The "crisis of the humanities" is the classic example in recent times. Consequently, the de facto capacity of the Ministry of Education to

shape the national share of the academic program is limited by the political power and political will of the decentralized regions.

National Assessment of Educational Quality

Assessing the quality of education in the various autonomous communities is another tool intended to identify and strengthen areas of inequality and academic need. In 1993, the LOGSE law created the National Institute of Quality and Assessment (INCE). The LOGSE preamble reads, "In a decentralized structure in which the various geographical areas are largely in control, it is even more important to have an instrument which serves to reconstruct a vision of the whole and provide each and every organization with relevant information and necessary support so that it functions more effectively. Autonomous Communities will therefore participate in the National Institute of Quality and Assessment."[81]

A major INCE assessment of secondary school 14 and 16 year olds identifies both the possibilities and problems associated with using educational assessment as a mean of drawing the 17 autonomous community educational systems into a whole. The INCE assessment instrument was issued in 1997 to a sample of 56,555 students, 3,287 teachers, and more than 600 public and private schools. The study focused on, among other things, comparisons of achievement levels across autonomous communities in the areas of reading comprehension, language and literature, mathematics, natural science, geography, and history. Through the use of the same assessment instrument throughout the nation, INCE was intended to lead to, for example, a reduction in inequalities between various regions through compensatory actions (e.g., more scholarships and classrooms), ensuring that the national minimum requirements were complied with, and the introduction of a permanent system of self-regulation in each autonomous community.

When the study, called "The First X-ray of Secondary School Education," was released, the reactions were more inclined to divide the educational system rather than to bring it together. Key individuals and groups put interpretations on the data that reinforced their own vested interests. For example, two teachers unions, a parent association, and the socialist (PSOE) party argued that the results supported the effectiveness of the 1990 LOGSE reform and cast doubt on the harsh attacks that the P.P. Minister of Education had directed against the reform.

Two autonomous communities, Andalucia and the Canary Islands, refused to participate in the assessment. Their official response was that they had developed their own educational assessment units and would conduct their own evaluations; a refusal that represented a certain violation of the

spirit and quite probably the letter of the law. The unofficial reason, which surfaced in several interviews, was political. That is, the two regions were under the political control of other political parties and feared that a poor showing in test results would be used by the P.P. party as a political weapon against them in future elections. None of the seven autonomous communities that were decentralized at the time participated in the natural science, history and geography portions of the INCE assessment.

Several of the regions that fell below the mean scores of the other regions searched for public explanations, such as Catalonia which emphasized that its below-par performance was probably due to the heavy burden of immigration into its region. The Minister of Education expressed concern about the overall results, but particularly those in history and geography—the central focus of the "crisis of the humanities." The President of Spain's prestigious Royal Academy of History observed that the study revealed that secondary school students "learn little and learn badly."[82]

Amidst the flurry of finger-pointing, political posturing, accusations, and the search for excuses for poor performance, the INCE Director, José Luis García Garrido, tried to calm the alarmists and refocus attention on the purpose of the assessment—the identification of and reflection upon the quality of education throughout the nation and the pursuit of means through which it can be strengthened.[83]

The Conference of Education Counselors

As the decentralization process unfolded in the 1980s, the country needed a planning mechanism that would serve to coordinate the educational policies and programs being developed and executed by the MEC and the decentralized autonomous communities (de jure). An early experience signaled why such a coordinating mechanism was necessary; soon after the decentralization process began the capacity to gather and reproduce nation-wide educational statistics was lost. Various regions had begun gathering their own data using formats that could not be aggregated at the national level.

The LODE law of 1985 created the Conference of Counselors, with the Minister of Education and the autonomous community Counselors (chief educational officers) of the seven already decentralized regions as members. Much of the work of the Conference (which meets at least once a

[81] INCE (Instituto Nacional de Calidad y Evaluación), Organización y actividades (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura - 1997). LOGSE Preamble, p. 14.

[82] In a 1991 international country comparison of mathematics proficiency for 13 year olds, Spanish students slightly outperformed American students. National Center for Education Statistics, Education in States and Nations (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1996), p. 158.

year), is carried out by five technical subcommittees each focusing on a specific issue (e.g., personnel, curriculum, statistics, etc.).

Manuel de Puelles points out that de facto the Conference is an instrument of cooperation and not coordination because none of the decentralized regions are obligated to carry out the decisions of the Conference when they believe their own statutes of autonomy are being violated. Rather, the Conference operates as a mechanism that brings together the chief educators of the decentralized regions and the MEC to discuss common problems and to search for possible avenues of collective action.[84] Interviews with observers of and participants in the Conference of Counselors reveals two underlying problems that limit its effectiveness as a major integrating force. The first problem is a generic distrust on the part of several autonomous communities that the Conference may be used by the MEC to control the actions of the decentralized regions.

The second problem is that even though issues are brought to the Conference as technical problems, the proposed solutions tend to have heavy political overtones. After all, the Minister and the Counselors sitting around the table all received their appointments as representatives of a particular political party, thus political agendas are never far from the surface. That said, it should be noted that at times the Conference is capable of reaching important agreements and carrying out complex actions, such as those surrounding the execution of the 1990 LOGSE reform. However, with the elections of 1996 and the shifting of power from the political left to the political right, the capacity for the Conference to be a forum for coordination and cooperation diminished, even for the LOGSE reform, because of the revision of political priorities.

The State Educational Advisory Council

The final mechanism that can serve to facilitate the integration of the various decentralized regional educational systems is the State Educational Advisory Council (to be called the State Council), created by the 1985 LODE reform law. Whereas the Franco regime had forcefully denied groups and institutions with special interests participation in the educational system, the new Constitution embraced and encouraged such participation (Art. 27, para. 5). There are 80 members of the State Council that represent specific groups, such as public and private school teachers, parents, union representatives, university professors, members of national educational distinction, church and laic representatives, and others. Significantly, the President of the State Council and 10 percent of its members are designated by the Minister of Education.

[83] The observations on the INCE assessment were taken from a series of newspaper accounts reported in El País from March 10-17, 1998.
[84] Manuel de Puelles Benítez, "Educación y autonomía," p. 184.

The State Council, which must meet at least once a year, has the right to: (1) review, critique, and produce an annual report on the general state of education in Spain, and (2) suggest changes to drafts of all proposed education legislation before it actually becomes law.

While the State Council serves important functions, such as being a democratic forum for debating the great educational issues of the day and calling attention to special educational needs (e.g., finance, personnel, student rights, academic freedom), there are also various constraints that limit its capacity to influence the national integration of the decentralized educational system de facto. For example, in addition to the creation of the State Council at the national level, the LODE law also authorized the creation of a council with similar functions in each of the decentralized autonomous communities, provinces, and municipalities. However, the various regional councils are separate entities from the national State Council. There is no overlapping mission, membership, or even a coordinating device.

Another characteristic of the State Council which can limit its capacity to influence the Ministry of Education on national educational matters is that the Minister of Education appoints the council's president and eight council members. Consequently, the incentive for the council to be a critic of legislation proposed by the Ministry of Education could be compromised by having so many individuals actually appointed by the MEC. Also, while it is true that the council must be given the opportunity to critique draft proposals of education law before they actually become law, several past and present members of both the state and regional councils expressed serious concern during interviews that the draft legislation reaches them too late in the process to propose and have accepted any substantive changes. These councils receive the proposed legislation only after several other powerful bodies (e.g., unions, Conference of Counselors) have already hammered out agreements with the MEC. Consequently, the actions of the state and regional educational councils are often frozen out of major issues of educational policy, and their actions are, as a State Council report points out, "pure paperwork without any utility or are merely testimonials."[85]

On the positive side, following the transition from the political left to the political right in 1996 and during the so-called "school wars" between the political parties, the State Educational Council stepped into the battle zone and provided significant leadership in setting new goals and gathering support for them across a wide spectrum of educational groups. The representative makeup and non-partisan character of the State Council gave it credibility at a time of serious political turmoil.

[85] Consejo Escolar del Estado, Informe anual sobre el estado y situación del sistema educativo correspondiente al curso 1995/1996 (Madrid: MEC, 1997), p. 190.

In sum, all six of the de mechanisms just discussed have the integrative capacity de jure to help preserve and reinforce the concept of one "whole" educational system made up of 17 decentralized parts. However, the actual experience to date has been that a multitude of political, economic, and organizational pressures have created conditions that limit the capacity of all six mechanisms from exercising de facto their full measure of integrative powers. Whether these six mechanisms gain strength or are weakened in their integrative capacity will have major implications for the future of the educational decentralization process in Spain.

The Ministry of Education as a Force for Decentralization

As an institution, was the ministry a key agent in forging the decentralization process in Spain? Probably not, as most respondents inside and outside the MEC pointed out in interviews.

In order to carry out this role, the MEC would have at least had to (1) help prepare the autonomous communities to receive the decentralized authority (e.g., training, collaborative planning, negotiated agreements), and (2) prepare to downsize and modify its own mission from control to support. According to agreements between the two major political parties, the educational systems of the final 10 regions were to be decentralized on January 1, 1998. The actual execution, however, was delayed until 1999.

With respect to the first issue, the Ministry of Education delayed "until the final hour," as one senior executive in a large, undecentralized region emphasized with more than a little irritation. The explanation provided in interviews in the MEC was that the Partido Popular had been in office for only a little over one year and the newly appointed leadership had not had sufficient time in office to develop the decentralization procedures. Granting the truth in this statement, it might be pointed out that the original five-year delay to decentralization specified in the Spanish Constitution for those autonomous communities on the "slow track" was intended precisely to benefit the central government (MEC) and the regions with the experience gained by observing the historic regions which were decentralized early on the "fast track." As an institution, the MEC had had more than 20 years to make preparations, not just the one year.

If the MEC was late in assisting the autonomous communities to prepare themselves for educational decentralization, how was the MEC preparing itself for a new, downsized role? Manuel de Puelles, a noted Spanish educational scholar, points out that even toward the end of its centralized control over the last 10 regions, the MEC had not begun its own process of transformation. "The Ministry of Education and Science does not appear to have prepared itself for what it inevitably should become: a small ministry that works for national legislative policy; and together with the

autonomous communities, crafts an improved education program, promotes cooperation and coordination, corrects regional inequalities, and evaluates the educational process."[86]

[86] Manuel de Puelles Benítez, "La política educativa," p. 105.

Part
8

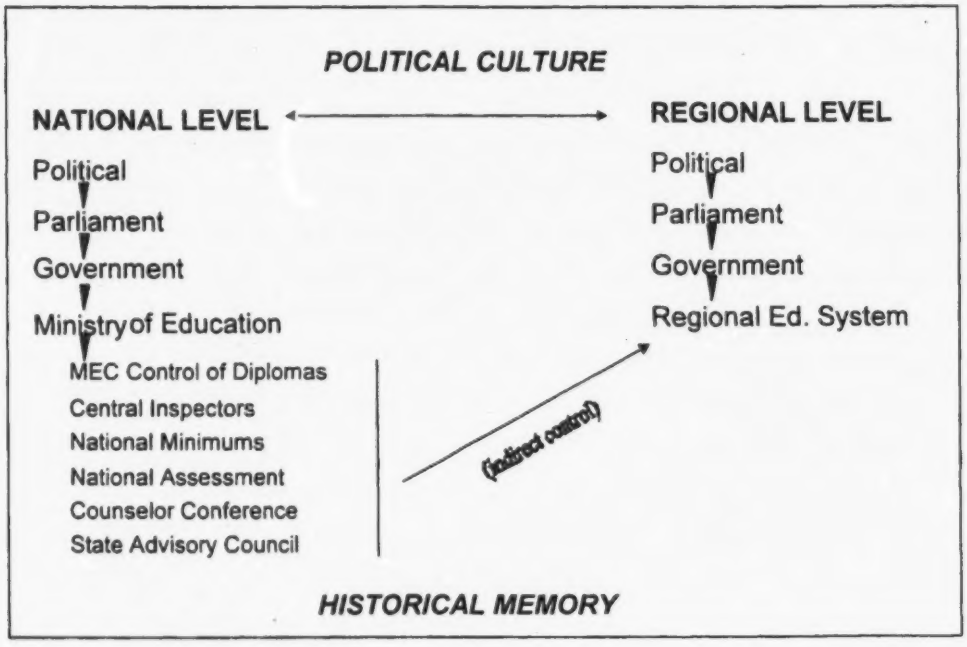
Conceptual Analysis

In a conceptual context, this final section addresses two central questions:

- Following the death of General Franco, how did Spain succeed in changing from the most centralized to one of the most decentralized educational systems in Europe?
- Why did the educational decentralization process take almost twice as long (20 years) as originally anticipated?

Obviously, there are neither easy nor definitive answers to these questions. However, there are concepts which may help explain this process of educational reform.

Figure 1: National-Regional Interaction



Political Culture and Historical Memory

The **political culture** of a nation is made up of the beliefs, expectations, values, and traditions that shape its processes of governance. In the case of Spain the national political culture is not shared throughout the country because several historical regions have political cultures of their own—some predating the nation itself. Consequently, like giant fault lines traversing the socio-political geography, powerful tensions build up with periodic eruptions of various magnitudes that radiate across the land. In political terms, these eruptions take the form of demands and confrontations pressuring for more and more regional self-rule.

Historical memory, however, is a strong countervailing force to the demands for outright autonomy, self-government or independence of the historic regions. The political chaos that accompanied the First Republic (1873-1874) and Second Republic (1931-1936)—both of which stressed the rights of regional self-government—and the devastation of the Civil War (1936-1939) that brought a sharp end to all vestiges of regional self-government, are fixed indelibly in Spain's historical memory.

Institutions, Breakpoints, Turning Points and Course Corrections

Institutional theorists emphasize that a primary objective of pubic bureaucracies is to establish institutional control that leads to standardized practices and social predictability.[87] Thus, the organizational environments of public bureaucracies (including educational systems) consist of rules, norms, and definitions of situations that prescribe the actions of participants (e.g., students, teachers, principals and other administrative functionaries). For that reason, one school looks and operates basically like all other schools in the system.[88]

A fundamental difference between institutional governance under autocratic and democratic regimes is that in a dictatorship the rules of procedure and behavior apply to everyone except the rulers who can violate them at their own discretion. In short, they are above the law. In a democracy, however, everyone is bound equally by the same procedures and laws.

A **breakpoint**, Paul Strebel writes, is reached when an institution encounters a fundamental change of conditions, such as the death of a dictator or a crash in the stock market, making existing standard operating procedures counterproductive, dysfunctional or even useless. To adjust, the system makes a sudden, sharp, radical change from its previous mode of operation. A **turning**

[87] W. Richard Scott, Institutions and Organizations (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).
[88] Brian Rowan and Cecil Miskel, "Institutional Theory and the Study of Educational Organizations" in Handbook of Research on Educational Administration, 2nd edition, (eds.) J. Murphy and K. S. Louis (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), ch. 17.

point is less forceful than a breakpoint, but it also leads to radical change. In this instance it is gradual and incremental.[89] A **course correction** is gradual and incremental, but does not lead to radical change. A serious danger exists if a nation reaches a breakpoint and there are no mechanisms in place to facilitate the radical transition from one form of government to another. This type of discontinuity can and often does lead to political chaos as powerful factions fight to gain control. Spain reached a critical breakpoint at the death of General Franco. Suddenly, the old institutional frameworks demanding disciplined control and conformity to an unrepresentative leadership no longer made sense.

Bridging, Embedding, and Institutionalizing

Bridging is a mechanism that provides passage from the breakpoint to a newly established mode of operation. **Institutionalization** is the process by which the new practices and procedures become standardized and generally accepted as the new mode of operation. Following 40 years of autocratic government, this breakpoint could have led to chaos of historic proportions, but it was bridged successfully by a young monarch who provided both the vision and leadership that led to a series of negotiated pacts agreed upon by the nation's major centers of political power. During much of the transition, collaborative consent rather than the institutionalized rules of the previous regime was the guiding force behind the public bureaucracies. No doubt the historical memory of what might happen if political pacts were not reached played a decisive role in the bridging process.

The new Constitution (1978) turned the transition (1975-1982) from a potential calamitous breakpoint into a turning point as it introduced reforms that balanced the demands for regional autonomy (e.g., recognizing the geographical integrity of the historic regions, power sharing, slow- and fast-track decentralization) with the need to maintain the geo-political reality of one-nation. One major reason why educational decentralization actually took place was because it was embedded in the public administration portfolio that the Constitution and subsequent laws turned over to regional control. Had the effort been made to decentralize education through the Ministry of Education alone, the transfer of authority may not have survived the turbulent times that followed.

With the new Constitution in place, Spain had institutionalized the existence of political parties that directly or indirectly shaped the actions of the parliaments, governments, and educational structures at the national and regional levels (Figure 1). During these early years (1975-1982) however, consensus and compromise guided the evolving government structure and educational system because no single political party held sufficient power to take control of the change process.

[89] Paul Strebel, Breakpoints: How Managers Exploit Radical Business Change (Boston: Harvard Business

The Socialist Government's Turning Point

In 1982 when the socialist PSOE party captured an absolute majority in the national and most of the regional parliaments, sufficient power was concentrated to execute a genuine *turning point* (a radical but incremental shift) in the trajectory of the educational system that reflected that party's political philosophy. Seeking to make the educational system an instrument for social equality and economic development, the PSOE party passed three major reform laws during its 14-year control of the national parliament. LODE (1985) and LOPEGCE (1995), among other things, provided significant measures of regional and local discretion over academic, management, and parent participation issues. LOGSE (1990) initiated a 12-year incremental restructuring of the entire primary and secondary educational system—the first such reform in 20 years.

The Course Correction of the Political Right

In the 1996 elections the political pendulum swung to the right as the socialists lost control over the national parliament and therefore the national government. The Popular Party wanted to initiate a radical incremental *turning point* in the educational system to reflect its philosophy just as the PSOE party had done several years earlier, but it faced major constraints. First, the Popular Party did not win an absolute majority in the Congress of Deputies. Rather, it had to rely on establishing a working majority formed through a political alliance with a small regional Catalan party (CiU) that held only 16 seats (of 350 total) in the Congress of Deputies.

Second, the CiU represented the historic region of Catalonia, and therefore was in a position to exercise enormous influence (and damage) to any government initiative that ran counter to its own regional interests and those of several others. Consequently, when the Popular Party attempted to change the minimum requirements of the humanities (particularly history and geography), the CiU rebelled along with every regional party not controlled by P.P. Engaging in and then losing the "crisis of the humanities" was a bitter political lesson for the party that was still in the early stages of learning to run the government. In addition, when the P.P. assumed control of the Ministry of Education, the leadership energetically and forcefully criticized the three major educational reforms that the PSOE government had passed into law during its 14 years of parliamentary control. However, much to its dislike, the P.P. Ministry of Education had to continue enforcing these educational laws because the party did not have the parliamentary votes to change them. Importantly, Spain had become a nation of laws and not of people. The democratic process had by now been completely institutionalized, and at least in these early years the P.P. has had to be content with limited course corrections rather than the more radical turning points it proposed to introduce during the political campaign.

School Press, 1992), p. 11.

Delays Overcome

As noted, Spain's success in educational decentralization can be attributed to many factors.

The democratic structure of governance, the continuing central-regional tensions pressuring for continued decentralization, embedding educational decentralization within the regionalization of public administration, and the incremental approach to change which avoided rapid, radical shifts in direction all made important contributions. However, although successfully accomplished, the question exists as to why the decentralization process took 20 years—almost twice as long as originally anticipated.

When this question is posed to academics in Spain, a relatively common response is that the country was still learning how to conduct institutional reform in the context of democracy after so many years of autocratic rule. The process of educational decentralization was delayed by many forces at the national, regional, and local levels.

For example, at the national level the PSOE party was instrumental in establishing the decentralization goal and strategy of the nation, but in 1987 it froze the process completely when only seven of the 17 autonomous communities had been decentralized. The socialist party saw its political control over the national and regional parliaments weakening and chose to suspend temporarily the decentralization process rather than contribute to the growing power of other political parties at the regional level. However, academic reasons also contributed to the suspension as well. The PSOE party wanted to reform the structure and content of the primary and secondary school systems and felt this could best be done if additional decentralization were not taking place at the same time. Another contributor to the delay was discord over the inequity in the degrees of authority that had been transferred to the seven already decentralized autonomous communities. A law equalizing the degrees of authority was not passed until 1992.

Forces at the regional level also contributed to the delay in decentralization. For many years several of the artificially created regions which had no history, culture or traditions of their own were quite ambivalent about pursuing educational decentralization. Some felt they could lose important benefits provided by the Ministry of Education that could not be duplicated at the regional level. Also, the long-standing distrust between the center and the periphery played a role as several regional governments feared that the national government would transfer responsibility and authority over education but not the funds to run the schools.

The Ministry of Education also contributed to the delay in various ways. For example, for twenty years the MEC made minimal effort, through collaborative planning or training, to prepare the re-

gions to receive the transfers of authority and responsibility. The chief educational leaders in the non-decentralized autonomous communities were typically not invited to join in meetings with the educational leaders of the decentralized regions. Also, the MEC did little to prepare itself for its post-decentralization mission by opportunely downsizing administrative positions, reordering tasks, and retraining personnel.

Delays also took place as senior officials at the Ministry of Education engaged in heated polemics with other political figures over educational policies rather than seeking common ground that could advance the educational mission. When the ministry functioned as a technical rather than political institution seeking to improve the processes of organization and management as well as the quality of education, important advances were achieved more quickly.

In the final analysis, in this author's judgment, the story of educational decentralization in Spain is a story of success. Even thought the path was not particularly smooth, through patience and political will the twin objectives of democracy and decentralization specified in the Constitution of 1978 were achieved.

What happens to the educational decentralization process in the next few years will certainly be interesting and perhaps quite surprising. As previously discussed, and illustrated in Figure 1, at least six de jure mechanisms have been put into place to ensure that the decentralized regions operate in an integrated fashion that reinforces the "one nation" concept. Experiences with all six mechanisms suggest that they have particular limitations that may not be able to constrain the decentralized regions from exercising considerably more degrees of freedom de facto than provided for in their enabling legislation. As the 21st century unfolds, observing whether the 17 regions in Spain exercise their educational authority in a balanced national-regional fashion, or simply pursue their own regional interests, will be another interesting story to tell.

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